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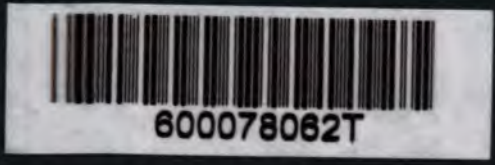
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ONE LOVE IN A LIFE.

VOL. III.

ONE LOVE IN A LIFE.

BY

EMMA M. PEARSON,

AUTHOR OF

"OUR ADVENTURES IN THE WAR,"

"FROM ROME TO MENTANA,"

&c. &c.

"As the sunflower turns to her god when he sets
The same look that she gave when he rose."

MOORE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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BOOK III.

AUTUMN

ONE LOVE IN A LIFE.

CHAPTER I.

AFTER LONG YEARS.

Well, have you heard all the story,
That your great eyes are so sad?
Yes, he was heartless enough, Bessie, dear,
Heartless, and worthless, and bad;
But somehow I've loved with the same old love,
Grieved with the same sharp woe,
From then until now, though at last, thank God!
I am weary and willing to go.

EDGAR FAWCETT.

IF anyone looks quietly back ten years, they will find how entirely circumstances have changed, if not in themselves or their own household, yet in the world around them. They may have been anchored and at rest in some sheltered haven,

but beyond its bounds the ever restless sea has been working good or evil, bearing onwards, amidst sunny calm, ships to their destination, bringing friends and dear ones back to home, and wealth to the men who sent them out, or wrecking them in storm and tempest, leaving ruin and broken hearts behind.

All we may know of these changes is that we are older, less hopeful, less active than before; and not till we contrast the past and the present, after a lapse of years, do we find how great is the difference. New discoveries in art and science, new modes of thought, even new creeds of faith; we have been gradually broken into them, till they have become part of our life, but still the change is there.

Muriel had not rested in any quiet home during the ten years that passed before the third crisis in her life came. Those years had come to her fraught with much of sorrow, and very little of joy. The

brave old captain had gone to his rest, and his wife survived him but two years.

Muriel's home was broken up, but Herbert's dolorous predictions were not fulfilled—she had not to go out as a governess; the death of a distant relative had left her with a sufficient income for every comfort; but her heart was restless and lonely, and she travelled over half the world, and came back with all her natural intelligence cultivated to its highest point. Ropsley-on-the-Sea knew her no more. All her old friends were dead and gone, and the place seemed haunted by pale ghosts of bygone days.

Mrs. Evans still lived, harder, sterner, and more "truly pious" than ever. Herbert was the only son with her; he had never married, and his love for Muriel had changed to hatred as enduring as in such a character would be probable. Charlie had gone to live in London, and was in business for himself. He could bear his

home surroundings no longer, and his memory of Muriel, whom he saw but rarely, was as gentle and loving as ever.

Alberic Parsons had lost his second wife. Alice died a year or two after the sudden termination of Muriel's engagement; her life had been so colourless a one that she was but little missed, and Alberic married again, this time a gay-hearted, dashing woman, who took the reins into her own hands; and it has been hinted that Alberic's regrets for his departed second were very sincere. Perhaps he had better have been contented with his two first ventures on the ocean of matrimony, but we find that, though many single-barrelled widowers (if we may call them so) remain unwedded for the rest of their days, we rarely find a double-barrelled one who does not take unto himself a third helpmate.

This is possibly owing to the fact that in the first instance the deceased wives

have been so wonderfully good as to leave undying regrets for their loss; or so infinitely bad that the poor sufferers dare not venture upon a repetition of the disastrous experiment; whereas, in the second case, that of those who marry two or three times, the wives have been of an average class, neither so good as to be eternally bewailed, nor so bad as to be "warnings." But there is an old saying, "Beware of the third;" and Alberic found the necessity of doing so.

Mr. Vivian was a helpless invalid—the active brain had overworked itself; and when Muriel saw him once, during one of her short visits to England, he did not recognise the woman by whose side he had stood in her darkest hour.

To one man the rolling years had brought good fortune, and that was Count della Villareale. The liberation of Italy from shore to shore, with the exception of Rome, still sitting a chained mourner in her

widow's weeds, had restored Antonio della Villareale to the lands he had forfeited by his so-called treason, and to the rank which had been obscured in exile. He had been absent from England when Muriel's marriage was to have taken place, but he heard on his second visit of the cruel ending of her bright dreams. He had never forgotten her; when he met her on one occasion at Florence, it was as an old friend; and whenever she went to Italy, he always tried to be of service to her.

And what had been the fate of the weak-minded man who had loved and wronged the true-hearted Muriel? He had sowed the storm, and reaped the whirlwind. Once married, the passionate love which had led both astray faded out. Kate felt that she had acted hastily, that she had sacrificed all for love, and that she ought to have filled a better position; and, her desire of revenge and love of mastery once satisfied, she tired of the very thing

she had most coveted, and Caryl was loved no longer.

There were causes for irritation too—just ones—had she not brought them upon herself? She did not remember, when she tempted Caryl Trevor to betray Muriel Gore, that they were both of the same county, and whoever else was ignorant of the story, the people of Sandshire would never forget nor forgive it.

They went down to Trevor Hall, to find themselves cut by the whole county. There was no resource—Trevor Hall was let, and they took a house in London. Things were no better there. Wherever they went, they were sure to meet some of the Sandshire aristocracy, or some one who had known the old regiment; and eyes were raised, and shoulders shrugged, and whispers went round, "That man and his wife here!—really it is too bad!" And no second invitation was ever sent.

Then, to add to it all, the old regiment

came home, and the first day that Colonel St. Barbe went to the club, Trevor was there; and as the Colonel entered the room he started up to greet him, but St. Barbe looked sternly at him, and said calmly, in the presence of a dozen other officers, "I don't know you, sir; nor does any gentleman in my regiment." And Caryl was sent to Coventry by the whole of the club.

To remain in England was impossible, and they went abroad, where society at large was ignorant of their early life, and opened its arms to the handsome Englishman and his distinguished wife. But this was not the future Kate had dreamed of, and she resented the failure of her hopes as if it were all Caryl's fault. He too was miserable. He had not foreseen the social consequences of his error—he forgot that a man who sins against the laws of God, and the code of morality, provided he does it with some show of decency, may

and does escape scot-free; but the man who sins against the rules of society must suffer its penalties. He knew now how great had been his crime—he looked back to the happy days he had passed with Muriel with vain regret.

Then he had been loved and honoured, as it fell to the lot of few men to be; now he was in exile, the scorn of his old brother officers, the contempt of those amongst whom he had once shone "a bright particular star;" and for what?—for a woman who had ceased to care for him, and for a love that had been his ruin, and, dying out, had left him nothing but bitter memories. His heart turned once more to Muriel, with a deep impassioned love that he strove uselessly to control.

"Too late!—too late!" were the words that echoed day and night in his ears, and he tried to drown remembrance, as so many other men have done, in the whirl where the women were as reckless as he was, and the

men as willing to smother all better feelings in wine "and riotous living."

It was his turn now to hearken for every echo that came out of the darkness, to watch for every trace of Muriel. He saw the deaths of her father and mother in the papers; he often saw her name in hotel books —that was all. He had never crossed her path, he knew it would be sad for both to meet, yet he hoped on for that, as only the wretched can hope. He met Villareale, and when he found that the Count, much as he despised him, could yet understand his misery and pity him, he took the Italian aside and told him all.

"You have deserved it," was the answer. "There is but one kindness you can do her—avoid her; let no sight of you revive those cruel memories of the past. I trust she has forgotten you, except as one who cast away the truest love ever given to one so weak as you are (and Heaven only knows why she loved you, I never could understand it); but avoid her, never seek her

out; it will be evil for both of you if you meet."

"It cannot be worse than it is," said Caryl. "I know she loves me still—it would not be Muriel if she did not; and I cannot die till I have looked in her dear eyes again."

But it did not come to pass; though Caryl searched everywhere, he always missed her; and at the time we see her again, Muriel had returned to England, to pass the Summer and Autumn there, and was in London, with her old friend and favourite, Nellie Heathcote.

Mr. Heathcote was dead, Nellie an orphan, and she had gladly accepted Muriel's invitation to pass with her, in London, the time she intended to remain in England. A third person was there—an older friend still, Miss Jerome, the same kind-hearted, simple soul as ever, and as active still as when, in by-gone days, she had followed the bidding of her capricious pupil, Kate Kennedy.

She heard but rarely from her, and the answers she sent were few and far between, cold and stately; for good Miss Jerome could not forgive Lady Beauvilliers her treason to Muriel Gore.

One fine May morning, ten years after that sad wedding-day, these three sat in the drawing-room of a house in Weymouth Street. Muriel was writing at a side-table. She looked, of course, older, and the lines of thought and care were on her face; but the setting of the head, so peculiar and so graceful—the dark, sad eyes, and the expanding nostril and curving upper lip, were all unchanged by years. Some might have said she was improved, some that she was quite the reverse. Certainly, if the face had gained in power, it had lost in sweetness; it was cold and proud, and the smile often more sad and cynical than joyous. She rarely flushed up into her old earnest way—it seemed as if all her deeper feelings had exhausted themselves, and left

behind only a wreck of what they once were; but Nellie, who knew her best of all, save Charlie, suspected that these feelings were but sleeping, that the chords which had once rung out so full and true were not broken, but only silenced, because the master-hand that could have drawn sweet music from them touched those chords no longer. Love and Religion, Caryl and Mr. Vivian, were dead to her now.

Nellie, too, was changed; she had been a good-natured cheerful girl—she was a bright, sympathetic, intelligent woman, and Muriel delighted in her companionship. She was very good-looking, too, and, at twenty-five, in the prime of her womanhood. Brave brown eyes she had, that looked steadily out, with no shadow of fear or falsehood, a sweet smile, and a ringing laugh that was infectious to all around.

She was on this morning very busy on some elaborate piece of worsted work,

while Miss Jerome was deep in the sorrows and trials of the heroine of the last new novel.

"Nellie," said Muriel, suddenly, "just look here. Do you remember that odd little woman, with grey hair and spectacles, that we met at the soirée on Thursday? Well, here is a letter from her, in the name of the Excelsior Club, requesting us to attend a special general meeting, and to have our names placed on the Committee."

"How very nice!" said Nellie. "Where is the Excelsior Club? Is it as big as the Carlton? I hope the men are a good set."

"Men, Nellie!—why, it is all women!"

"All women!—then of course they quarrel! Women always do, unless they have some men in their society."

"And here is another invitation, to go to a 'Woman's Wrongs' meeting."

"What is that? Does every miserable woman intend to go and relate her story?"

"It is to be hoped not; but, Nellie, your ideas are most extensively superb. Really, we Ropsleyites are magnificent in our notions! It all comes out of our intense self-conceit—nothing small and humble suits us. Have we not the largest parish church in the diocese, the widest market-place in the county, and the keenest easterly winds in the kingdom? Our storms are more damaging, and our seas run higher, by our own account, than anywhere else. I declare it reminds me of what was once said of the people of Baltimore by one of their own countrymen, 'Those Baltimorians are so darned conceited, they don't even think *they* want to be born again!'"

Both her companions laughed.

"My dear," said Miss Jerome, "I don't understand these new fashions. Women never wanted clubs in my day, and I have lived sixty years, and not yet discovered what woman's wrongs are, if 'they do

justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with their God.'"

"Right, dear old Jerrie," said Muriel, who had taken up the pet name of bygone days. "I suspect that it is women who have no homes, no children, and no settled pursuits, who raise this cry. However, Nellie, we'll go to both—it will be a study of life; besides, the Excelsior Club is a good work—it is truly a charity to support it. Just think of it, Nellie; there is a comfortable home during the day for those poor souls who have none of their own—who work as teachers or artists all day, and would at night have to crawl home to some dull fireless attic, if they had not here brightly-lighted rooms, books, papers, and food at a cheap rate, to refresh them after a day's labour."

"We'll go to that," answered Nellie, decidedly. "Poor things! how grateful they must be!"

"And we'll go to the other, too," said

Muriel. "I wish fully to understand what our wrongs are." She paused suddenly, and the look on her face was sad and stern. "I think," she added, after a short silence, "our worst wrongs are wrought by the selfishness and the faithlessness of men. What public meeting can cure that, when even the doctrines of the gospel have no effect to purify society at large, or raise the standard of honour, in the minds of too many of our so-called gentlemen?"

"Thinking of Caryl again!" was Nellie's mental comment. "I hope she hates him heartily!"

"We'll take Charlie Evans with us," resumed Muriel, "to the 'Woman's Wrongs' meeting. I am afraid we cannot take him to the Club."

Nellie blushed. Charlie Evans was her hero, but his heart had never wandered, and it seemed hopeless that he should ever appreciate her devotion, which was, by the way, most carefully concealed.

"Mr. Evans called here yesterday, when you were out," remarked Miss Jerome; "he came to ask for Lady Beauvilliers's address."

"Why?" asked Muriel, sharply.

"Something about money; you know Mr. Evans was her mother's trustee, and Mrs. Evans is sole executrix."

"Oh, is that all?" said Muriel; not knowing what to say, and wishing to find out where Kate was. "Did you give it to him?"

"Of course I did; at least as far as I knew. I told him she would pass the Summer, first on the Lakes,—I mean, of course, the Italian ones,— and then in Germany. She gave her address at Frankfort for the month of June, and they talk of going to Vienna for the Winter. Kate fancies the air of Italy is too relaxing for her."

Muriel made no remark, but she had thought of passing the Winter in Rome,

and this confirmed her. No chance of meeting Caryl there; and yet, how she longed to see him once again; if possible unseen by him! Was it wrong to wish this?—wrong to feel that he was as dear as ever? She could not tell—all was a tangle.

There had been a time, when first she had been left alone in the world, when she had taken up religion with all the enthusiasm of a convert; but then Mr. Vivian was by, to turn her thoughts from earth to Heaven, and she had felt it so easy to give up even Caryl for One dearer still to her heart; but, like all such enthusiasms, it died away, and the love of Caryl came back as strong as ever. She saw so much in Ritualism that grieved and disappointed her. She never could understand why so much fighting went on about dresses and colours; why a black stole was not as good as a green one; why faith must be taught by type and emblem to an educated con-

gregation, or even to people who can read; and she thought "the doctrines they teach are worth dying for, the dresses they teach them in not worth such squabbling." It gave her an idea of unreality when awful truths were put aside to discuss position and costume. And then she did not find that the grand and glorious things enforced in their churches had much influence on the private lives of their congregations. Certainly they went to church more, but were they truer, gentler, better, more loving in their judgment of others, more trustful, more forgiving? She did not find it so, and it had a bad effect upon her.

The devil has many agents, but none who do his work more thoroughly than those good people in whom we place our trust. Just because we think they live too near to God to do wickedly, we believe in them for His sake; and, when they fail us, our very faith runs in danger of shipwreck.

They may go day by day to church, they may talk of love and faith, they may quote texts and abstain from open evil, but they have done the devil's work, and verily they shall receive their reward!

Muriel had gone through many phases of faith, and was now living in a state of quiet indifference, and general trust in a love and mercy that would bring light out of darkness some day. She was very sorry that she did not love God as she had done. She thought she did not, she had persuaded herself of that fact, and it required a fiery trial to show her her own heart, or she might have gone to her grave, and never known it; and that trial was coming fast, and it was sent in mercy, to perfect all that was wanting in Muriel Gore.

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CHAPTER II.

WOMAN'S RIGHTS.

"The rights of women, what are they? The right to labour, love, and pray;
The right to weep with those that weep, the right to wake when others sleep;
The right to dry the falling tear, the right to quell the rising fear;
The right to smoothe the brow of care, and whisper comfort to despair;
The right to live for those we love, the right to die that love to prove;
The right to brighten earthly homes with pleasant smiles and gentle tones."

WHAT will the women of the next generation be? After all the new innovations made on old systems, all the roads thrown open to them, will they be wiser and better?—will they be able to fill their places in the world with more credit to

themselves and benefit to others? The answer to that question lies in the future; and it seems to me that the reform, if reform it be, is begun at the wrong end.

Before women claim equal advantages, educational, social, and political, with those enjoyed by what Lord Derby terms "the less ornamental sex," it would be well to make them better women. Let them learn that the extravagant dress of the present day is the result of slavery to milliners and dressmakers. Men do not like it; they endure it, that is all that can be said. Let them learn, too, that marriage is not the one end and aim of life—to hunt down a good match not its noblest employment. If they will begin with these two points, there might be hopes of the rest; but as it is, no wonder that good men stand aloof, and wise men mock at their prattle about their right to share in the government of the country, and to equal scholastic honours with men.

Now, when Muriel was young all this was unknown, and she did not see that the rising generation were much greater and grander beings than she and her contemporaries had been; but she was willing to hear all that could be said, and to aid in any project that seemed really likely to do good. So she and Nellie paid their subscription to the Excelsior Club, and on the appointed night betook themselves thither, fully purposing to enter heart and soul into a plan which was so very evidently a kindly if not a charitable one.

The house in which the Club had ensconced itself did not resemble the Carlton in outward appearance. It was a dingy house, of decent size, in a central street, once far more fashionable than now.

Muriel looked with some curiosity at the members, who were assembled in the drawing-room. Very respectable, intelligent-looking women formed the majority; few traces of fashion in their dress, and an

anxious look on their faces, as if it were day by day a hand-to-hand fight with the world for a livelihood.

Some were quiet and depressed, some loud and excitable; and conspicuous amongst the latter was a small, dark-eyed, dark-haired girl, whom Muriel mentally named Vesuvius.

The Honorary Secretary stood up and begged for silence, on which the members immediately commenced a noisy discussion as to whether the Hon. Sec. had the power to ask for silence, there being no by-law on the point.

The discussion came to nothing; it died a natural death; and the Hon. Sec. read out a list of new members, all of whom being present, no one was bold enough to get up and object to any of them, Vesuvius merely remarking that "she hated swells," which, being a statement of a general and indefinite nature, was allowed to pass unnoticed.

"Isn't it fun, Muriel?" said Nellie, in a whisper. "I shall make a speech about something soon—I really must."

A fair-haired lady with a helpless look was then requested to take the chair, and accordingly moved from the sofa to an arm-chair. This formality having been accomplished, the Secretary read a statement of accounts, of an exceedingly complicated nature, and concluded by observing that the meeting was called together to decide whether another maid-of-all-work should be taken on to the working staff of the Club.

On this simple question a storm arose, and Vesuvius began it, by observing that if people came there merely to do the Club a kindness, they had better stay away.

Muriel was puzzled. Did the lady allude to the maid-of-all-work or not? she could not decide, but then up rose another member and said,

"This is not a charity, we had rather have the club in an attic than be dependent on charity!"

It seemed that the point in question was, to reduce the expenses to the lowest margin, so as to make the club self-supporting; but this did not appear in any of the remarks made, and was a piece of intelligence whispered to Muriel by her next-door neighbour.

"We had better have the ventilators first," said a member, who was strong on sanitary points.

"Fiddle-de-dee!" said Vesuvius. "We shall be blown away with your ventilators."

"And a good thing too if *you* were," retorted the sanitary member.

"Low!" said Vesuvius scornfully, "very low, but just what might be expected from *her*," addressing the members at large.

"Is not this personal?" asked the Chairwoman piteously. "Has anybody any resolution to move?"

kind conduct of sundry members of the club," and here she dissolved into tears.

"Don't you think she ought to specify?" asked the Chairwoman of everybody in general, and no one in particular.

"I think," said Nellie, trying not to laugh, "she ought at least to say what it is; even if she names no names, conscience will convict the guilty."

"Does anybody put that as a resolution?" asked the Chairwoman.

"Yes, we all do!" said Vesuvius.

"You cannot," said the Hon. Secretary, from behind her spectacles. "Everybody cannot move a resolution; one must move it, another second it."

"Fiddle-faddle!" said Vesuvius, "who cares for your opinion? You say just what pleases you."

"Of course I do," replied the Hon. Secretary, fairly roused, "so do you. Why should I say what does not please me?"

"This is a digression," observed Muriel.

"Let us find out what this good lady has to complain of."

"Speak up," said Vesuvius, addressing her.

"Hold your tongue," said the Hon. Sec. "There is no resolution before the meeting."

The afflicted individual solved the difficulty by saying, in melancholy tones, intermixed with sniffs and sobs,

"I really do not know what I have done, but for the last three weeks, when I have entered the Club, no one has shaken hands with me; and I have already denied that I advertised for a husband—in fact, I considered it quite took away my character to say I did such a thing, so of course I disproved it."

Muriel fairly laughed aloud.

"If you had," she said, "it was entirely your own affair; but surely you do not mean to say that your name was put to any such advertisement?"

"Oh dear, no!" and she wept again. "But they say my carte-de-visite was seen in a Matrimonial Agency office."

"In that case, no one is safe," said Nellie, very gravely. "I shall go round to all the matrimonial agencies in London, and rescue mine. I daresay it is in some of them."

"But *what* do you want us to do?" asked the Chairwoman. "We cannot make people civil to each other by any code of by-laws."

This was a puzzler. Nellie came to the rescue.

"Would it meet the difficulty," she said, "if I moved that the Committee shake hands with you, and in future always with each other, to offer a good example to the rest?"

This motion was carried by acclamation, and the Chairwoman was about to declare the meeting ended, when up rose Vesuvius again, and demanded that the dinner-hour

should be changed. This suited the artistic but not the scholastic or literary portion of the members, and a violent discussion ensued.

"I really think," said Muriel to Nellie, "that this is a hopeless affair. If women will not begin on a principle of mutual forbearance, and willingness to accommodate each other, it is no use attempting to get up any such institutions as this for them. I think, Nellie, that having paid our subscriptions, and so done our best to help them, we'll retire from the scene."

"Let's see this meeting out," said Nellie. "It will come to a free fight soon."

"Which you'll enjoy, Nellie! That's owing to the Irish blood in your veins!"

"I plead guilty," said Nellie. "I have a warlike turn, I own, and a bit of itinerant warfare is a great delight to me."

By this time everybody was talking at once, various extraneous subjects were introduced, two or three quarrels were pro-

ceeding vigorously, and very strong adjectives were being used.

"What *do* you think of this?" asked the Chairwoman, addressing Muriel.

"Simply that they are proving their total incapacity for the task of redressing women's wrongs, or exercising the political franchise. I hear some of them are leaders in the movement."

"Yes; that dark-eyed girl is one."

"What! the one I call Vesuvius?"

"Yes; if you do call her so!"

"Well, she *would* be an odd M.P. Why, she would fly off at a tangent at any moment, and vote just as the impulse of the moment took her."

"You are very right, Miss Gore. I fear we must wait till we have educated our women for the privileges they claim. But did you remark the lady who sat next to you, Miss St. John?"

"Is that her name? Yes, I did. She is charming."

"There you have a woman fitted to take any place, political or educational, highly refined, with great intellect, and a strictly practical mind. She has taken up medicine as a profession, but so quietly, so unostentatiously, that she has won her position, step by step, by actual work, without any noisy clamour."

"Shall we meet her to-morrow, at the Woman's Wrongs meeting?"

"Probably. I suppose we shall all be there. But really I shall declare this sitting closed, for they have talked themselves hoarse."

"It reminds me," said Nellie, "of what a friend of mine once said, when he was asked what he thought of having a Parliament with women in it—he is Irish, Muriel, so of course we sympathize—well, he said he had only one objection—*that* Parliament would never adjourn, for no woman would let another have the last word."

The Chairwoman laughed.

"He might well say so, if he could have been here to-night. Ladies, I adjourn this meeting for three months."

Muriel, Nellie, and Miss St. John voted for this resolution; no one else was at leisure to attend to what was going on, and the Chairwoman delightedly resigned her very disagreeable post, and prepared to go home. Muriel and Nellie took themselves off, highly edified at what they had seen; and as they descended the stairs, the sound of voices, still in loud debate, reached them.

"The Kilkenny cats are nothing to them," quoth Nellie.

Thus ended Muriel's first public appearance as a speaker, and with it, too, her hopes that women could be as calm-judging and reasonable as men—that is, taking average women; there are, of course, brilliant exceptions to every rule.

Next evening was the Woman's Wrongs meeting, and there Muriel and Nellie repaired, escorted by Charlie, now grown

into a handsome man. Miss Jerome sternly declined to accompany them; she had been reading an article in which the peculiar species of women who hold forth in public were denominated the "Shrieking Sisterhood," and she fully believed that she should be literally deafened by a series of shouts and screams, expressive of the intensity of their sufferings.

"What is your opinion of this movement, Charlie?" asked Muriel, as they strolled towards their destination.

"That a good woman can always find a sphere, and a clever one full scope for her talents, without all these new-fashioned ways; and as for the stupid and wicked of the sex, I presume the Woman's Wrongs Committee would decline having anything to do with them."

"Don't you think I should make a delightful M.D.?" said Nellie. "How gracefully I should feel your pulse!—how compassionately I should inquire into your

symptoms, and with what earnest gravity I should write a prescription !"

"More illegible than such things usually are !" laughed Charlie. "Well, as long as you don't take knife in hand, or approach me with any steel instruments of torture, I should not mind your attending me. But, Nellie, don't you think that, unless the female M.D.'s are all prohibited from practising until they are fifty, unless they squint with both eyes, or are marked with the smallpox, they would detect sundry unaccountable symptoms of palpitation of the heart, not quite in accordance with the diagnosis of the case—that's the right word, is it not?—sundry flushings of the pale face, or palings of the flushed one? I am afraid, Nellie, you would do more harm than good in some cases."

Nellie laughed heartily.

"If ever I attend you, I will give you the very nastiest medicines I can invent."

"There, Muriel !" said Charlie, triumph-

antly—"is not that a powerful argument against lady-doctors, even when they profess to attend only their own sex? We never know the little secret spites in a woman's heart—the little unforgiven slights and offences rankling there—the little hidden loves. Just imagine, if a woman saw her rival lying before her, so much in her power that even a little neglect would kill, without more active measures, what a fearful temptation it would be! There are very few women who could resist it, I am afraid."

"Charlie! Charlie! your opinion of our sex is really a very poor one."

"I know two exceptions, Muriel," and he looked under his long eyelashes at both his companions. "Don't quarrel with me for having a sort of impression that they are the two which prove the rule."

Muriel sighed, Nellie blushed, and their arrival at the door of the lecture-room put a stop to their conversation. The

room was well-filled, the female sex being largely in the majority, as also on the platform. In the chair was an M.P., whose principal claim to eminence was that he was *le neveu de mon oncle;* he was supported by another still less illustrious senator, and a dark whisper ran round the room that he thrashed his wife when he retired into the shades of private life; but this, as Charlie observed, "was probably scandal—there *must* be so much floating about at a woman's meeting."

Muriel listened to the speeches, without being convinced that it was at all necessary to any woman's proficiency, in a given subject, that she should have taken a diploma from some college, and with a strong suspicion that many diplomas are obtained by a system of cram, which is no real test of ability or sound learning. As for political rights, she thought that the consideration of this branch of the subject had better be deferred to the next gene-

ration, for certainly the present one, to judge of it by the specimens here exhibited, was very unfit to exercise the franchise; and as for taking a place in the councils of the land, it would be a sad day for England when they were swayed by woman's caprice and inconsistency.

Some of the speeches were eloquent —all women are that by nature; and as some of the speakers were very pretty and graceful, the applause was loud and long. When it came to the medical part, and Muriel heard equal privileges claimed for lady-students, she felt that there were ways and means of instruction, in certain branches of surgery, of which no delicate woman could ever avail herself. She thought of the dead-house and of the dissecting-rooms, and of all their horrible details, and shuddered at the very idea that any woman could dream of being present there.

"Oh! Charlie," she said, "if they must go through such scenes—and I suppose

they must—really to understand what they are about, no woman ought to think of being a doctor—at least, a surgeon."

"Quite my opinion," said Charlie. "They are in their right places as nurses; but, as I told Nellie just now, I could never like a woman whom I was obliged to picture with a knife in one hand, and a bottle of chloroform in the other."

"Very nasty indeed," said Nellie. "If I went in for anything, it would be for the Bar. I am convinced that I should look so well in a wig—powder is so becoming."

"Nellie," said Charlie, "that is a very feminine view of the case. You ought not to think of the becoming."

"As if you men never did! Why, you are longer getting yourselves up for a ball than I am; and what you are doing, I cannot imagine, for you have no back hair to braid."

"My idea is," said Muriel, laughing, "that I shall take to the political line.

Fancy me an Under-Secretary of State, rising in my place to answer impertinent questions as to my policy. I should give the unhappy questioner such a set-down !"

"In the style of the Excelsior Club ?" asked Nellie; "personal and slang."

"Something in that style, refined off to bitter satire in easy English."

"And if I were in Parliament," said Nellie, "and if I detested anyone, I should vote against every motion he brought forward, whether it was right or wrong."

"Clearly a woman's right," said Charlie. "Stick to that, Nellie, and you will be for once a consistent woman."

The meeting went off smoothly, as the audience, having only been admitted by ticket, were pretty well of one mind. As Muriel was coming out, Miss St. John stopped her.

"What do you think of it ?" she asked.

"I was wondering," answered Muriel, "if any of these ladies, who, I see,

are married women, have homes to attend to and children to train; and if they have, how they can find time to go about speaking, and getting up a political agitation, and what their husbands say about it."

"Nothing, I suppose," said Miss St. John. "Probably they have enforced women's rights in their domestic circle. For myself, I have neither husband nor children, and I claim for single women a recognised position in any line of life they take up. Once grant this, there will be fewer foolish marriages, and many more useful members of society."

"There I quite agree with you," said Muriel. "We have to teach the rising generation, that there may be as much of honour and dignity in writing the word 'Spinster' after a name, as in putting 'Mrs.' before it."

"It matters little whether it is Mrs. or Miss," answered Miss St. John, "if we can make the name an honoured one. Excep-

tional women have done it in all ages, but we want to place everyday women in a position to do it, if they will only honestly avail themselves of the means open to them. Well, I must say good night. I have my evening rounds to make."

"That's a sensible woman," said Charlie. "I should not mind voting for her, if lady members of Parliament are to come into fashion."

"I am very tired of all this," said Muriel. "I have had enough of public life. Nellie, we'll go to Rome in the Winter, and study its Catholic phase."

"I'll study anything you like, for the sake of seeing Rome, Muriel. Charlie, you must look me up all the books on Italy, read them over for me, and then I'll skim over the best."

"Thank you, Miss Heathcote," answered Charlie, with a low bow. "The next thing will be that you will demand my presence there, to explain Murray to you."

"I wish you *would* come, Charlie," said Muriel. "We'll take dear old Jerome, to do the highly respectable, and enjoy ourselves, far from this foggy land. We'll have violets and camelias in January, and a blue sky overhead."

And so that expedition was settled, and they agreed to go to Rome, and enjoy themselves. "*L'homme propose, et Dieu dispose!*"

CHAPTER III.

THE LIFTING OF THE VEIL.

A curse upon my life henceforward lay.
This day alone? Methinks of coming life
Somewhat I know, with all its loss and strife.
MORRIS' *Earthly Paradise.*

SUMMER sunshine on the Lake of Como; the blue waters reflecting back the emerald shores; the white houses, dotted here and there, half hidden in the luxuriant foliage of the trees; the scent of roses in the air; a dreamy luxurious stillness all around. It was far too hot for any native to come out of some dark shaded resting-place, where he could enjoy his noontide *siesta*, but not so with the travelling English, and a steam-boat was making its

way up the lake to land its passengers at Bellagio. Not far from thence, on the very shore of the lake, was a villa, with a terrace overhanging the water; and here an Englishman stood, in the shade of a chestnut tree, watching the steamer anxiously.

It was Caryl Trevor; but how changed from what he had been! The frank, true look in the eyes was gone, and had been replaced by an expression of peculiar softness and sadness. Here and there a streak of grey was visible in the still thick and curling hair, but a full beard and moustache hid the mouth, and gave a stern expression to the face. He looked as if, to use a common phrase, he had led a hard life, and he looked, too, as if haunted by some painful, unsleeping memory of the past. He had grown reckless and scornful; he doubted all—man's truth and woman's honour, and his motto was, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die."

"Always the same," he muttered.

"Contemptuous aristocrats, with maid and courier. Americans flush with 'almighty dollars,' and Cook's tourists, getting in everybody's way, and knowing no language but their own. Bah! it is not worth dining at the *table-d'hôte*, to meet any one of them; and she never comes—never, never. I will not stay here any longer. Kate may do as she pleases; I shall go down to the south, and take up my abode on Capri; there is good boating and fishing off the island."

He turned, and went up the path to re-enter the house. As he did so, he saw Kate crossing the hall with a letter of many sheets in her hand. He walked into the salon, and he noticed that she hastily hid the letter in her book.

"Is the English mail in?" he asked carelessly.

"No," was the answer; "do you expect letters?"

"I expect nothing," was the weary re-

ply, "but I saw a long letter in your hand."

"You are mistaken," Kate said calmly. "It was some private notes of my own, on what I had been reading."

"Theology as usual, I suppose. You will bewilder your brains with subtle definitions; but do as pleases you best, only leave me to my easy form of belief."

"Which amounts to nothing at all," sneered his wife.

"Right, Lady Beauvilliers; it amounts to as little in theory as that of the world at large in practice. I shall not dine at home to-day."

"Always at that stupid *table-d'hôte*; I cannot conceive what amusement you find there."

"None, but I find what I do not get here, a warm welcome, even if I have to pay for it;" and turning on his heel, he walked out of the room.

Kate looked after him steadily.

"How changed he is!" she thought. "What a disappointment life has been to both of us! and it might have been so different! Have I sinned so deeply? Is there a curse upon me? I will not believe it, even though Father Fairfax says so; nor yet that if there is, all gates of forgiveness, save one, are closed to me."

She took up the letter, and began to read it over again. She was changed—she looked sad and anxious, worn and flushed. Yet she was handsomer than ever, though she, too, had dark memories of the past.

That Austrian boy she had known so well at Vienna, was it true that he headed a hopeless charge, and flung away his life at Sadowa? That fiery impassioned man, with all the *sangue azur* of imperial Rome in his veins—could it be that he allied himself to the rash expedition that failed to restore Rome to Italy, and, driven to despair by her unkindness, after she had so vowed that her love was all his

own, threw himself on the French bayonets of De Failly's men, and lies under a green mound in the field of Mentana?

Yes! she knew and felt that she had played with men's loves and lives as with an idle toy! Was that sin? Love was so needful to her, and Caryl cared for her no more. She was restless and miserable, and she needed love—she thirsted for it, and she had it not. In this frame of mind she had met at Vienna with Mr. Fairfax, once a clergyman of the English Church, now a priest of the Roman one.

He was a very handsome man, with piercing eyes and a musical voice. He had been attracted by Kate's beauty and evident unhappiness, and resolved to bring her into what he called "the one true fold," where alone peace could be found. So gentle, so sympathizing was he that he soon established a great influence over Lady Beauvilliers, and when they left he kept up a correspondence; and though he

had never succeeded in convincing Kate, either of the necessity of taking up religion in good earnest, or of joining the "one true church," yet she found in his friendship and in his letters a new source of interest and pleasure.

Trevor cared little or nothing how she amused herself, so that she in no way interfered with him; indeed once or twice, when she had been more than usually disagreeable and sulky, he thought that he should have no objection to Mr. Fairfax's persuading her that, what between the reckless life she had led, and the heresy in which she persisted, she had sinned so deeply that her only hope of forgiveness would be to renounce the world and enter a convent.

At all events he would be free from her, and he could seek out Muriel and persuade her that this act of Kate's had freed him in reality from all tie to her—and then—— But further than that, even Caryl's dream had never gone.

Muriel was too honest, too true, to be thus led astray; yet surely they might be friends, they might see each other, enjoy each other's society, and leave the rest to fate.

Caryl had gone rapidly on the downward road, but he felt, as sure as if he had seen Muriel and knew it from her own lips, that she was unchanged in her love and in its purity; and purity is the strength of love, the crystal that enshrines it, and keeps it safe from all external influences, from the fire of passion and the frost of indifference; and it was thus that Muriel loved Caryl still.

While Kate dreamed over Mr. Fairfax's letter in the salon, Trevor occupied himself in a little room, which he had taken for his smoking-room, in writing the account of a sporting adventure in Albania. It was so written that it was adapted to the pages of any magazine, and he hoped to get it published in one of those popular ones which all the world reads, and which of

course Muriel often saw. He must recall himself to her memory; he knew of no other way to do it, and he brought in skilfully, here and there, little touches of personal feeling, tender reminiscences of a past in England, which would show her that she was not forgotten. She might see the magazine, she might read the article, and then!—then she would know that she was indeed revenged in the undying remorse he endured. He worked hard all day; the little tale was finished, the packet was sealed up, and Caryl strolled off with it to the hotel, where the letters for the post were collected from the English and American visitors. The long table in the dining-room was laid out for dinner, the glass and silver flung back the rays of the evening sun and the brilliant hues of many vases of flowers contrasted with the snowy cloth.

"Many guests to-day?" asked Trevor of the head-waiter, who knew the handsome Englishman well.

"*Si, Signor*, the house is full, but I have reserved a place for you by the side of one of the new-comers, an English gentleman.

"*Grazie*, Nicolo," said Trevor carelessly. "Ah, there goes the dinner bell, and here come the diners."

They trooped in, old and young, handsome and ugly, well got up and badly dressed, quiet and elegant, loud and vulgar, all the varities so constantly met with at a foreign *table-d'hôte*.

Caryl watched them with listless curiosity. There was no familiar face amongst them, and he took his place, opened his *serviette* and began his soup, wondering if the silence would ever be broken, the dark veil that had closed over the past ever be lifted, and a glimpse of Muriel be visible, if but for an hour. The place by his side was empty till the soup had been removed, but then the *garçon*, who was bringing Caryl the wine he had ordered, drew back the chair to allow a gentleman to pass in, and Caryl, with a

start of surprise, recognised Herbert Evans. He, too, was changed, bronzed by travel, stouter and more manly, but the sullen look was the same. He had not grown better, like wine, with age. He did not see Caryl at first, but as he turned to look down the table he started.

"Trevor!" he said, "Is it you?"

"The very same," was the answer, "allowing for the years that have passed since we met."

Herbert looked sharply at him; he would have given a great deal to know if Caryl had heard of his letter to Lady Beauvilliers, or if it had ever reached her at all, for no explanation had ever been given by anyone of the cause of Lady Beauvilliers's sudden return to England. But Caryl had never heard of it. In the whirl of events which succeeded the flight from the Charing Cross Hotel, all minor matters had been ignored, and if Caryl had thought about it at all, he always concluded that

Kate had heard suddenly of his approaching marriage in some letter from Miss Jerome.

She had accounted for her long silence by saying she had waited, not knowing Trevor's exact address, and fully expecting that at the expiration of six months he would write, or come to claim her; and that when this hope was over, she had started for England, to ascertain where he was, especially as she had heard quite unexpectedly of his engagement, and was sure that he had been led into a step which he would for ever regret, and which it was not too late to cancel. Indeed, it was very probable that, had Trevor then married Muriel, he might have thought afterwards that he had behaved very badly to Kate, and it might have thrown a cloud over his married life—not that he would ever have tired of Muriel as he had done of Kate, or ever have felt, as he did now, the consequences of his treason.

He was quite unaware of Herbert's share in the matter, and honestly glad to meet him, in spite of the sad memories connected with Ropsley. Now there was a chance of hearing something of Muriel, and he asked, eagerly,

"Have you left Ropsley long?"

"Only about six weeks, on a little tour, as a holiday after hard work."

"I suppose you hear constantly from home. Your mother must miss you so much, and Charlie too—but perhaps he is taking your place?"

"No!—he is living in London. I alone remain with my mother."

"Ropsley must be very much changed?"

"Very much indeed—all the old set are dead or gone."

"Indeed! Lady Beauvilliers hears now and then from Miss Jerome, but very rarely; and, if she does send any Ropsley news, I never know any of it."

"Possibly," said Herbert, with a side

glance—"possibly Lady Beauvilliers thinks that there is no one there now in whom you would feel any interest."

"Possibly." Caryl was puzzled; he did not like to ask about Muriel, and Herbert did not seem inclined to name her, so he tried another question, "You are not married, I suppose? Has anyone else entered that happy state?"

"No, I think not. Charlie is a bachelor still, hoping against hope that some day or other Miss Gore may relent."

The name at last! Caryl swallowed down a tumbler of wine to hide the quivering of his face, and then said, as steadily as he could manage,

"And she does not relent?"

"No, and never will. She has too good a memory, Captain Trevor."

What a thrill of joy ran through Caryl! True! true! through all!—through lapse of years, through change of place, through sin and sorrow, Muriel, his own Muriel *still!*

"Come and smoke a cigar with me after dinner," he said. "Lady Beauvilliers will be glad to see you."

"Will she?" thought Herbert—"I doubt it." But he only said, "Not to-night, Trevor; I am weary and travel-stained. To-morrow if you will, but this evening I don't feel inclined to leave the hotel grounds; rather, then, do you stay with me, and we'll have our coffee together."

The evening closed in, and Trevor and Herbert adjourned to the walk by the edge of the lake, and sat there watching the purple darkness close on the hills, and the moon rise over the lake. The ice had been broken, and Caryl could speak of Muriel now.

"Where is Miss Gore?" he said, after talking a while about her father's death, and the dispersion of the household.

"In London. Nellie Heathcote and Miss Jerome are with her. She travels a

great deal—she is never a Winter in England."

"Is she delicate?"

"No; but she is restless."

"Do you think she still grieves over the past?" Caryl's voice was broken as he asked the question.

"Yes, I do. She has suffered, and does suffer, from a far too faithful memory—it is sentimental absurdity."

"She does not suffer as I do, Herbert."

"You! Why should you suffer more than she does?"

"Because with me is the humiliation of disgrace, and the conscious shame of having acted like a rascal. At times it is hard to live through it. I have tried to drive away the thought by a life that she would spurn. Yes, Herbert, it is bad enough for me, but it would be worse than death to her. To Muriel Gore disgrace *would* be worse than death."

Herbert made no answer—his mind was

bent on that one thought—disgrace was worse than death to Muriel. It was so, he knew it, he felt it, in every fibre of his heart. He longed for revenge, with the unholy longing of a sullen and unprincipled temper; and here it was, brought before him in those words.

Once upon a time, long years ago, a sermon was preached by a now eminent colonial bishop, usually to be found on the sunny side of Pall Mall, after the fashion of colonial bishops in general; and in this sermon he taught that Satan is very powerful, that he has many agents to do his bidding, and that they speed here and there on his errands, but that wherever a great sin is to be committed, or a weak soul tempted to some act that shall place it beyond the pale of forgiveness, there he himself is present, trusting it to no meaner intelligence than his own.

If this is true, if the veil of the invisible world could have been withdrawn, surely

Caryl would have seen the Prince of the Powers of Darkness hovering near, his wings overshadowing the moonlight lake, his lurid eyes gleaming through the night. Surely he was very near when Herbert Evans resolved to bring disgrace on Muriel, through her love for Caryl Trevor. But evil triumphed that night, and Herbert turned to Caryl—

"She loves you as dearly as ever—I know it to my cost. There is no happiness for her in this world while utterly severed from you. Why should you not be friends? It would be something. Was it not so once before?"

"You are right, Herbert, it was—it can be so still, if we could but meet."

"It would be better, far better that you should. You are all in the wrong now. But I should say that the worst of it is that you have made her life so miserable. If you could in some degree restore

it to happiness, would you not cancel more than half the wrong?"

"If there were any way by which I could do that, I should feel it a duty to do it."

"Very true; and you can. Meet and be friends. It is this cold silence that wounds her so deeply. I'll tell you what, Trevor; my mother says in her last letter that Muriel has invited Miss Jerome to pass the Winter in Italy with her and Nellie Heathcote. Their head-quarters are to be Rome. Cannot you set up your tent there?"

"Of course I can, and I will. I dare-say Lady Beauvilliers will have no objection. She will amuse herself with the Church services."

"Oh! is that her turn now? Has she a speciality for being a *dévote*? I wish you joy, Caryl; you'll have plenty of spare time on your hands."

"I always have that; we do not interfere with each other, and I believe that

Kate would be very glad to be friends with Muriel. It is so long since those painful things happened, that I don't see why ill-feeling should be kept up, and I am sure that Muriel has no wish that it should be so."

"No, indeed; she will be only too glad to be friends again, but she might not care to come to a place where she knew you were. Take my advice, say nothing about your plans, but let me know where you are from time to time, and when she is safe in Rome you shall hear it from me."

"A thousand thanks, old fellow—it is most kind of you; we shall probably stay here all the Summer, and towards Autumn run down to Florence. I think I shall leave Kate there, and go over to Corfu; it is easy now to get there, *viâ* Ancona or Brindisi; and there is good shooting to be had, so that I should make my way back about Christmas, and go on to Rome for the season. But you'll let me know?"

"Without fail; and if you once meet, it will be all right, and Muriel will be happier than she has been for many a long day."

They parted—Caryl to return to his uncongenial home, and Herbert to think over what had passed. He was well satisfied. The train was laid, the explosion must follow; but he was not quite sure what would be Caryl's course; therefore, on the next morning, he presented himself at the villa, and found Caryl alone. Kate had gone to call upon some Italian friends just arrived. Herbert's effort this day was to discover if Caryl's principles had or had not suffered shipwreck in their rude contact with the world. On the whole, he was well satisfied. He found that Trevor and his wife were in heart utterly alienated, and that Caryl had a wild idea that such a state of affairs left him pretty much at liberty to do as he pleased; that his notions of religion were at the lowest ebb, and that he

owned no law save that of his own will. His life had not been a happy one, and he had been unjustly dealt with by heaven, or fate. He had a right, if he could, to snatch some few happy years before the power of enjoyment was gone—they were his due; and as for the opinion of society, he cared nothing about it. What more could it do to him than it had done?

Such were his principles now, and they rendered him a willing tool in Herbert's hands. What fate was it that could have tempted Muriel Gore to waste such love on such a man? Is it not always so? The deepest, the purest, the most unselfish love is generally given where it is useless —a tribute flung before unregarding feet, that tread it down, and do not even understand what such devotion means. Is it not so, even in a holier sense? Was not the grandest, the most pathetic, even Divine love "despised and rejected of men?" Not till we can value that at its

true price shall we ever know the worth of an earthly love, that is given but once in a life-time—given for Eternity, and which bears on it the stamp of heaven itself.

CHAPTER IV.

ONCE MORE!

Yet still thy name, thy blessed name, my lonely bosom fills,
Like an echo that has lost itself amongst the distant hills;
Which still, with melancholy note, keeps faintly lingering on,
When the joyous sound that woke it first is gone, for ever gone.

MRS. NORTON.

THE Summer passed on, and London began to send out a few of its crowded thousands to the highways and byways of Europe. Yet Muriel lingered there still. She had quite arranged all her plans for a Winter in Italy, and therefore did not care to leave England before October. Miss Jerome had agreed to accompany Muriel and Nellie, but not till after sundry

pros and *cons*, and many qualms of conscience, derived from a diligent perusal of the gloomy prophecies of Dr. Cumming, as to the impending fate of the "Great City Babylon."

"My dear," she said, solemnly, to the two friends, one morning, "do you think it safe? The judgment may fall at any moment, and it would be so very unpleasant to be there."

"Do you believe in Dr. Cumming?" was Muriel's answer. "He has been wrong half-a-dozen times as to the precise date of the end of the world. He may be wrong as to the destiny of Rome."

"My dear Muriel, the signs and tokens are so clear. Does she not sit on seven hills?"

"So does Constantinople," interposed Nellie. "And I think we might find seven in or near London, including Holborn Hill. I suppose it counts still, in spite of the Viaduct?"

"And the description in the Apocalypse," said Muriel, "of all the merchants of the earth bringing their riches to the City, answers better for the Thames than the Tiber. My dear Miss Jerome, you may twist prophecy any way you like."

"Did you ever hear," said Nellie, "of the worthy Evangelical clergyman who, having special business with a gentleman in Rome, arrived there late on a Saturday night, would not even go to church on Sunday, and left at daybreak on Monday, so resolved was he not in any way to countenance by his presence the abominations of the doomed city."

"Is that true?" asked Muriel, laughing. "Do you really mean that he never went to see the ruins? I could understand his not going near the churches, or even within sight of the Vatican, but never to look at that wonderful Colosseum, and the grand old aqueducts! I cannot believe it, Nellie."

"You may, though. It is perfectly true.

But it is to be hoped he is an exception to the rest of his cloth. I should not like to 'sit under that man.' What an ignorant, narrow-minded bigot he must be!"

"There are too many of them about, Nellie, and they bring discredit on religion. Why cannot we believe of each other that we are trying to go the right way? And if it should turn out to be the wrong one, it is not for us to set a limit to mercy, that we are told is boundless!"

"Well, my dears," said Miss Jerome, "I daresay you know best. I *should* like to see all the wonders I read of when I was a child. Of course you don't think there is any danger, or you would not go, and I do not pretend to be a better judge than you are, dear Muriel—you have travelled so much."

So it was settled, and Miss Jerome began to read "Gibbon's Decline and Fall" over again, and sundry other works of the same light and amusing description; and

when she had pretty well done history, she began upon antiquities, relieved by some ponderous octavos on ancient and modern art.

Meantime Herbert had returned to England, and presented himself in Weymouth Street. Muriel had never openly quarrelled with him. She did not know the full extent of his evil conduct, but she thoroughly detested him. Ten years before she would have shown it in her manners towards him, but now she had learned self-restraint, and except that she never invited him to the house, or in any way took the slightest interest in his affairs, she showed no outward sign of her dislike. Nellie was with her when he entered. They were busy over a map, sketching out their route, which was a frequent amusement, and was changed every day.

Muriel looked up when he was announced and bowed; she hardly touched his offered hand, and asked him to sit down, in

the cold tones of mere acquaintanceship. Herbert saw it, and inwardly chafed; but he ignored it as he thought, "The day is coming, Muriel Gore, when you shall look in vain for the outstretched hand of any honest woman. It will be my day to triumph then."

But he had his own dark ends to serve, and he suppressed every sign of anger or displeasure as he said,

"I have just come back from the Italian lakes, and I could not pass through London without calling to see you and Miss Heathcote."

"I wish you had omitted the compliment," thought Nellie.

"Did you enjoy your trip?" she asked aloud.

"Very much. I had fine weather and pleasant companions."

"Both favourable circumstances for the enjoyment of foreign travel," remarked Muriel—"the weather especially."

"I met some of our old acquaintances at Lake Como," Herbert went on.

"Ours!"

Muriel bent forward to listen; she had a presentiment as to what she should hear, but she spoke no word.

"Yes," resumed Herbert. "I found the Trevors quartered there—or, rather, I suppose I ought to say—Trevor and Lady Beauvilliers."

He knew that they were never called the Trevors; he suspected that it wounded Muriel when she heard it—that one little womanly piece of consolation was to her the fact that there was no Mrs. Caryl Trevor.

"I suppose you ought," Nellie broke in. "If she chooses to keep her title—and she paid dearly enough for it. At least, let her enjoy that paltry pleasure. Kate would have sold her very soul for a coronet."

"She looks handsomer than ever," said

Herbert. "I saw her twice, but she did not ask after any of her old friends—Miss Jerome excepted."

And this was strictly true. Lady Beauvilliers had not been overjoyed to see Herbert. She had a lurking jealousy of Caryl—she suspected that he remembered Muriel only too well; and she did not wish him to encounter anyone connected with his past life. She did not care for his love, but she had enjoyed a sense of victory when she won Caryl from Muriel, and that he should care for her after all, was half a defeat. Therefore she had treated Herbert with perfect courtesy, but had not encouraged any confidences, nor would it have suited Herbert's plans to bestow any upon her. She must be kept in ignorance till matters had gone too far for interference.

"I am sure," replied Nellie to Herbert's last speech, "we quite return the compliment, for we never ask Miss Jerome anything about her; and she never writes to

my lady unless she is obliged to do so."

"Trevor looks very ill," said Herbert; quietly—and he watched Muriel's colour fade—"very ill indeed; he seems miserably out of spirits; he is not happy with Lady Beauvilllers, she does not love him. I don't think she ever did in reality. It was only a passing fancy. I pity him very much—I really do."

"Very much more than he deserves," answered Nellie. "I should like to be his lady doctor—I'd dose him well."

Muriel smiled faintly, and turned to Herbert.

"He chose for himself," she said. "Why should he be unhappy?"

"Is he not, in fact, an exile?" asked Herbert; "alienated from every friend and acquaintance of old times. Whatever his crime, his punishment is a heavy one, and he feels it bitterly."

"It is indeed," said Muriel, impulsively, moved by a great sorrow for Caryl's lot in

life. "It is indeed. Surely, after all this lapse of years, I can afford to think of him with forgiveness, at least."

"You have far more patience with him than I should have had," said Nellie. "I suppose, Mr. Evans, he was more anxious about old friends and acquaintances than his wife was?"

"Very much more so, Miss Heathcote; but the anxiety was limited to a very few, and principally centred in Miss Gore, as was natural."

How Muriel's heart leaped up!—how she longed to ask what were his very words!—how he looked when he spoke of her—every little detail that Herbert must know so well!

"I wish I had been aware that you were likely to see him, Herbert," she said; "I should have been glad that he had known that I quite forgave him."

"It would have been a good thing," said Herbert, apparently thoughtfully, "if I could have told him that from you. I

said I was sure it was so—that you were never likely to come across his path again (indeed, he said there seemed a fate against it, he had tried and failed so often); but it would have been a far greater consolation if I could have said, on your authority, and in your own words, that, if ever you did meet, you would meet as friends. I am sure he suffers very much from the idea that you have not forgiven him."

"Indeed it is true," said Muriel, eagerly. "If ever we do meet, it must be as friends, and I should be so glad if he could know it!"

"That he may easily," answered Herbert. "I am writing to-day about a commission I have to execute for him, and if you will authorize me to give him that message, I will do so."

"Thanks—thanks, Herbert!" cried Muriel. "Tell him I do quite forgive him—that we are quite friends, and that I do hope he will try to be happy."

"I will give your words exactly; you don't know what a good deed you do in sending them. Well, I leave London to-night, and have much to do, so I will take my leave. Good-bye, Muriel," and he held out his hand.

This time it was taken in a firm, warm grasp, and tears stood in Muriel's eyes as she said,

"Good-bye, Herbert, and may God bless you!"

"Good-bye, Mr. Evans," said Nellie. "Get through your business and go home. Mrs. Evans must miss you so much."

Herbert only smiled pleasantly, but that smile changed to a nasty sneer as he went down the stairs.

"The first step!" he muttered; "the road is an easy one now, and you shall tread it to the very end, Muriel Gore, and I shall be there to see it."

Nellie watched Muriel closely when Herbert left, and read her thoughts in the

dreamy look on her face. There was something so tender and loving in the eyes —an expression almost holy in its gentleness—that she felt Muriel was in danger, even in the very purity and unsuspiciousness of her love. She had forgiven a great wrong; she believed it was for the sake of heaven, and because much had been forgiven her; but Nellie, in her calm, dispassionate way, saw that love had quite as much to do with it as religion. Muriel was deceiving herself, she thought, and surely it was a pity to renew any intercourse with Captain Trevor; but as far as things had gone at present, there was nothing upon which to found a serious remonstrance. There was no real harm in sending a message of forgiveness to Caryl, so she only said,

"I never did, and I never shall, trust Herbert Evans. I should be inclined to fancy that it would unsettle Captain Trevor to have a message from you; and I wonder

if he really is as unhappy as Herbert describes him to be?"

"I am sure it is only right to send it, Nellie; the result I must leave in higher hands. I often wish I could realise the sense of a constant guiding hand, as I used to do. It is all such a puzzle sometimes, but there is no difficulty here; it must be right to forgive, and to say so, if there is any chance of its being of use to those who have wronged us. Nellie, dear, I don't think I shall go out this afternoon; it is hot, and I feel tired. But will you and Miss Jerome go and see those travelling-dresses we were talking about yesterday? One might as well be thinking of getting ready, for we may not be in London, when we once leave it for the seaside, till a few days before we start. If we take the route by the south of France, and the Comiche road to Genoa, we must leave in October."

"Very well, dear," said Nellie, "we'll

go and inspect them. But you look pale and tired. Go and lie down and try to sleep." And nodding gaily to Muriel, she went off to find Miss Jerome, and sallied out with her on the proposed shopping expedition. The business transacted, they strolled slowly homewards, and when they had come to quiet Portland Place, Nellie said,

"Miss Jerome, let us take a turn up and down here. I want to tell you something. Herbert Evans called this morning."

"Did he, my dear? I am glad I was not downstairs. He is a very disagreeable young man."

"My dear Jerrie, you should have heard him talk to-day; he was a model of amiability and good sentiments."

"Was he, my love? Then he was after something, you may be sure; he always is when he is amiable."

"I knew you would say so. Well, what

do you think he was after? Talking about Captain Trevor!"

"How very wrong, my dear, when we always try to avoid any reference to him, lest it should annoy Muriel."

"But there could be nothing to annoy her in what he said; he spoke of him in the style of a penitent grieving over the past, and longing for a token of forgiveness."

"Don't believe a word of it, my dear. How should he know anything about it?"

"He had seen him in Italy."

"Really! Well, now, that is surprising! My dear, I am very sorry for it. If Muriel gets the fancy into her head that Captain Trevor is suffering from anything about not being forgiven by her, she will be sure to feel it a duty to do something to console him. Nellie, my love, you must prevent that; it will be only worse unhappiness if they are ever brought into communication again."

"Too late, dear Jerrie; he asked her to send a message to Caryl by him, and she has done it."

"God bless me! All so suddenly!—after these years and years of silence! I don't like it, my dear—I don't, indeed; and Herbert means no good by it."

"You are quite right, dear Miss Jerome; but we can only hope it may end here. I fear not. I believe Herbert hates Muriel, and would do his best to injure her and to work her unhappiness. My poor darling Muriel, it has been a hard world for you! Miss Jerome, we must guard her, as we best can, from Herbert and all his machinations. I don't understand his game—there is something more than meets the eye; but, whatever it is, it will be strange if he can deceive two women watching over a dear friend."

Miss Jerome sighed.

"It is a very bad world, my dear. The more learned people grow, and the more

they talk about religion, the worse it gets. It is much worse than when I was young. People did know then what truth and honour and friendship meant; they don't understand the words now."

"It is very true, Jerrie—too true. Somebody assured me not long ago that the Millennium had commenced, and that we were actually living in it; and I could not help saying, 'Then the sooner it is over the better.'"

CHAPTER V.

LETTERS FROM OVER THE SEA.

I hold the years in my heart
And all that was is yet.

JEAN INGELOW.

MURIEL had tried to sleep, for she felt weary and over-excited; but the effort was all in vain, and she rose and paced the room, her hands tightly linked together, and thoughts of the past thronging thickly around her. Every truest, most noble instinct of a woman's nature was roused. Forgiveness, that could pardon the cruelest wrong, and hold out a kindly hand to the wronger; love so pure that nothing of earthly passion stained it; so undying that it bore on it the radiance of changeless-

ness and long endurance, all but divine; so unselfish that it sought only the happiness of the beloved; so intense that it realized that there could be no full completion of it here below. The mortal must become immortal before it could have its entire fruition. It was the love of soul to soul, and Muriel knew that, in the better land, those souls would meet never more to be rent asunder by the death of the frail body, or by the sin passed away with the chain of humanity, and there Caryl would be all her own once more.

So many have dreamed this dream. How has it stood the test when the time of trial came? Has not the delicate paradise flower drooped in contact with the less ethereal things of earth? Have not its lovely hues grown dim, and its sweet scent passed away, when sin and sorrow have come near it, and flung their poisoned breath on its fair leaves? It has been so far too often.

She looked back on past days—they came upon her as fresh as ever, for their memory was not worn out even by constant use. She saw Caryl as she had last seen him—young, happy, and loving, leaving her for a few days before he returned to claim her. How bright the world was then! She had grudged every hour of dulness or sorrow as one abstracted from the happy whole; and now she greeted every hour of joy as one taken away from the long dreary round of wintry days, as so much gain to her. And then the years of loneliness, the utter silence that had fallen upon all echoes of the past—it had been a bitter trial, but it was ended. She had heard that name once more, she had actually sent to him a message of forgiveness. How would he receive it? What answer would he send?

Over and over again she trod the round of memories of the past and speculation as to the future; and when she came down to

dinner, she looked so worn out, and seemed so quiet and depressed, that Nellie was puzzled what to say or do that might rouse her. To her great relief they had hardly finished before Charlie was ushered in.

"I have been making a round of calls," he said. "I gave up the day to that most fatiguing of all processes, and I am come here to rest. Muriel, you look pale. Have you been over-walking yourself?"

"No, Charlie, but it is very hot. I long for sea-breezes."

Charlie looked at Nellie, who made him a quiet sign to say no more on the subject; and he turned the conversation.

"Do you know where I have come from?" he said. "Well, I'll tell you at once—it is too hot for guessing. I have been to see Mr. Alberic Parsons. I never like Alberic to think that I grudge his having filled poor Alice's place—he had every right to do so. He is a very domestic,

Cemetery, and there hung the wreath on the tomb of the dear deceased—it is to be hoped with a proper proportion of prayers and tears. Mrs. Parsons told me he came home with his eyes red and his whiskers damp. She enjoyed the idea immensely, and says she never interferes with his little sentimental amusements."

Nellie laughed aloud.

"What a goose he is!" she said. "But I do hope the present wife will be kind to him. If Heaven had only granted him just a very little larger allowance of brain, he would not be half a bad fellow. The worst point about him is that he does not like you, Muriel. I could forgive him all the rest."

"Thank you, Nellie darling," said Muriel; "you are a dear good friend, but you must not expect many people to like me (because I like so few), and we were decidedly unsympathetic."

"I don't think," answered Nellie, "that

Alberic Parsons knows what sympathy is. He is eminently and superlatively selfish—all weak men are; but I think I can match Charlie's story with one quite as good. It seems that his present wife has a sister, who is daggers drawn with him—*eh bien*, on the last occasion, when Mrs. Parsons presented him with a little girl, he frightened himself very nearly to death, and sent off post-haste for his sister-in-law, to come over in readiness to bid her sister a last farewell. Ina did not seem to see why she should go there at his bidding, when she had not crossed his threshold for years, and she did not believe in her sister's danger; however, she did not exactly like to be out of the way, in case anything should happen, so she chartered a four-wheel cab, at fifteen shillings for eight hours, put a travelling-rug and a pillow inside, together with a flask of St. Julien, and some sandwiches, provided the driver with bread-and-cheese and a bottle

of beer, and went off to Lancaster Place, about midnight. There she heard that Mrs. Parsons was neither better nor worse, but the imminent danger phase had not come on, so she made the cab take up its station opposite the door; and there she sat and dozed, and ate her supper, and dozed again, till at day-break Buttons popped out and said, "It was all over—leastways, so he had been told to say, and there was a little girl,' on which she left a card with 'to inquire' written on it, and drove home."

"What an original idea!" laughed Charlie; "worthy even of you, Nellie!"

"It comes of Irish blood, Charlie. Ina has a dash of it too."

Muriel sat and listened quietly, but there was a far-away look in her eyes. Charlie fancied that she had heard something of Caryl. However, he waited patiently, till Muriel, complaining of headache and fatigue, bade them all good night, and Miss Jerome went off to compound some

sherry negus for her, which the old lady persisted in regarding as a cure for every complaint. When he was alone with Nellie, he turned to her saying,

"What has she heard of Trevor?"

"That he is in Italy, unhappy and longing for an assurance of her forgiveness."

"Who told her this?"

"Herbert, who has seen him."

"Herbert! I might have guessed as much! Did he bring a message from Trevor?"

"No, but he begged for one for him."

"And Muriel sent one?"

"Yes, you know her too well to doubt it—a message of forgiveness, a hope that if ever they met it might be as friends."

"And you did not warn her of the probable consequences of renewing any intercourse with Caryl?"

"I had no time, it was all so sudden, but I dislike and dread it as much as you do."

"Nellie, it is the beginning of trouble. Muriel does not know her own heart, her very earnestness, her very unselfishness will betray her. God grant they may never meet!"

"Oh, Charlie, Charlie, why did she not love you, instead of that wicked, vacillating Caryl Trevor?"

"It was not to be, dear; I have ceased to hope it. I shall never love again as I loved her. I cannot cease to love her, but I sometimes picture to myself what it would be to have associated with me, in the task I am sworn to, a lifelong guardianship of my early love, some dear good girl, who would understand that I could hold her very near my heart, though she was not Muriel."

Nellie looked down, and hope sprung up in her heart; but just at that moment Miss Jerome entered, having duly concocted and taken her draught up-stairs.

"I don't know what is the matter with

Muriel; she looks half sorry and half glad. My dear Nellie, do you think that she would take some homœopathic medicine? I took some myself the other day; they told me that three globubes would have just as much effect as a wine glassful of medicine. Very economical, my dear, I am sure; but, thank God, I can afford all that is necessary for my health, and really the globules are very cheap, so I took about twenty or thirty, and I felt very much better."

"Quite a new view of homœopathy," said Charlie; "but why do you suggest it for Muriel to-night?"

"My dear Mr. Charlie, she looks as if a very little would choke her, and those globules are so small."

"Bravo, Miss Jerome! You would be a charming homœopathic doctor."

"I am too old, Mr. Charlie, and too old-fashioned."

Both Nellie and Charlie violently disclaimed this, Nellie vowing "she was the

dearest old thing in the world;" and then Charlie went on his way with a sore and troubled heart.

A few days after this, the little party went off to the Isle of Wight, and Muriel seemed to recover her spirits and energy. They had all been out till very late one evening, rambling about the seashore; and, when Nellie came down next morning at the usual hour, she found that her companions were still in their rooms. A pile of letters lay on the breakfast-table, and Nellie turned it over to look for her own peculiar property, if there were any, and, in so doing, one addressed to Muriel met her eye. It was Herbert's handwriting, and the Ropsley post-mark, and there was certainly an enclosure. Nellie flung it down as if she had touched a serpent, and went out into the garden with the *Times*, to combine fresh air and news.

When the breakfast-bell rang to summon Miss Jerome she went in. Muriel was sit-

there, lost in thought—happy thought by the bright look on her face; but the ›r was not visible, and no allusion was le to it. Nellie thought over all the babilities, and decided in her own mind t the letter contained an enclosure from ryl.

The result of her meditations was that fore they went out for a drive, which ould occupy all day, she went upstairs ıd wrote a short note, which she took to ıe post-office herself. It was certainly ery short and simple:

"DEAR CHARLIE,

"There is a letter from Herbert o Muriel to-day. I am sure there was an ›nclosure. If [illegible] was, it came from Italy. She h[illegible]othing. You must ry to stop th[illegible] end of the line, I ım powerle[illegible]

[illegible]ver yours,

"NELLIE."

There was no postscript, but had Nellie watched more closely, she would have seen Muriel, too, go to the post-office with a letter, just as the carriage drove up, and she would probably have added one. Nellie was putting on a fascinating hat in front of her glass, and speculating on what Charlie would think of it when he saw it, so she missed this little event, and consequently there was no postscript, because it had not come off when she wrote, and no second letter, because she knew nothing about it. And, indeed, her forebodings were right. The letter did contain an enclosure, and so carefully was it worded that Muriel did not start at the idea of beginning a correspondence with Caryl; it only said:

"DEAR MURIEL,

"When writing to Trevor, I gave your kind and charitable message; in replying, he mentioned casually what a burden had been lifted from his heart, and

begged me to send you the few lines of thanks enclosed. I shall be very glad to forward your acknowledgment, which would place, as it were, a seal on this reconciliation—which, indeed, is but the right thing to do, after so many years of painful division; and it will, besides, remove all unpleasantness, should you ever meet. He tells me that Kate is entirely occupied with theological discussions with a very fascinating Mr. Fairfax, and that he feels utterly alone. I am writing to him again on business, in a day or two.

"Yours very truly,

"HERBERT EVANS."

The enclosure was shorter still:

"May God bless and reward you for the words of forgiveness that give me new life. I would ask only one favour of you—write them to me; then I can look at them when I feel too keenly all the evil I have done, and they will save me from recklessness

and despair. If we could meet we might even now be friends. I will hope on for that.

"CARYL."

That little piece of paper was put carefully by; the scent of some sweet flower was upon it, and it breathed fragrance over Muriel's life. Her answer was like herself, earnest and truthful. She wrote to Herbert, thanking him for his letter, and enclosing a note for Caryl.

"I am very glad we are friends once more. It has been a great sorrow to me to feel that there was any unkindness between us. I do forgive you from the very bottom of my heart, and I have prayed for you every day since we parted. Do not despair, do not be reckless, try to be all I once believed you, and we shall meet again—if not here, yet beyond the grave; and so may God bless you, and give you rest!

"MURIEL."

The greatest Puritan could have found no fault with either of the letters. There was nothing to rouse Muriel from her self-deception, and she thought of Caryl by day, and dreamed of him by night, till his image was once more so familiar to her, that when, ten days later, there came a foreign letter, and it was from Italy, she was neither alarmed nor astonished. It was written in more cheerful tones. It spoke of his undying regret, of his ill-assorted marriage, of his need of a friend, and entered into a few chatty details of his daily life. He longed so much, he said, to hear some news of her. Was she happy? Had she kind friends? How was her health?

She replied to it, addressing, as he requested, to the *poste restante*, at Como, imagining that his letters were to be sent there. She told him all about herself, and begged him to be loving to Kate, and patient with her.

In due time came an answer. In this letter he sent his photograph, to show her, he said, how changed he was, and asked for hers. Of course she sent it, and of course, too, the likeness of Caryl, the only one she had, was placed in a letter-case, and kept always very near, for constant use. And thus began her entry on the dark road, whose end she did not foresee, but she had true friends who did; and Nellie, who had once by accident caught sight of Caryl's photograph, and surmised whence it came, wrote straight off to Charlie, who, on the receipt of her letter, started at once for Ropsley. Both he and Nellie made the mistake of thinking that Herbert was still the channel of communication. Neither of them guessed that things had gone so far as direct correspondence between Caryl and Muriel; and Charlie thought that he might put a stop to Herbert's postal arrangements by an open remonstrance on the point. If Muriel

could have been spared temptation and sorrow, surely the true hearts around her would have shielded her; but it was not to be—she must pass through the fiery trial that would consume or purify her.

CHAPTER VI.

CHRISTIAN CHARITY.

'Tis well to ask our Maker to forgive
Our trespasses; but 'tis as we may bear
The trespasses of those who breathe and live
Amid the same temptation, doubt, and care.
Oh! ye who point so often to the herd
Whose dark and evil wings are all uncloaked,
Is there no other than condemning word
For minds untaught and spirits sorely yoked?
Are ye quite sure no hidden leper taint
Blurs your own skin if we look through the paint.

ELIZA COOK.

AS I draw near the closing scene of Muriel's life-drama, it becomes difficult for me to write of her so as to show her as she really was. Will you try to enter into the inmost history of a pure, loving heart, and to judge her gently, as

one more sinned against than sinning?

If Caryl had been what he was when Muriel had called him "Ivanhoe," there would have been no danger; but his nature had deteriorated in the life he had led, and his disappointment had made him impatient. He thought that the coming years owed him a rich recompense for the past. He had grown to despise, as narrow and contracted, all obligations of religion and morality. There was no true marriage, he maintained, "when hearts and souls were living apart;" and he quoted the sayings of German free-thinkers and French philosophers to justify his position. And now his sole aim and object was Muriel, the woman who had loved him so faithfully, who had borne with him so patiently. She should be his, cost what it might! It was an evil determination; and there is never a wicked vow made but the spirits of darkness are at hand to register it, and to aid in its accomplishment too.

It was Autumn now, but Caryl lingered on the lake of Como. It was too soon for Corfu, far too soon for Rome. Kate had no wish to leave—she was unhappy; and the free life she led there was her only solace. Mr. Fairfax had succeeded in rendering her thoroughly discontented with herself and her past life; in arousing her to a sense of a future awaiting her, whose tremendous importance outweighed all earthly considerations. She could not deny the truth of what he said, nor doubt his earnestness and his intense faith, which awoke in her the longing to be at rest, as he was. Like all persons of such temperament, she went from one extreme to another, and whereas she had formerly never given a serious thought to the unseen world, it now filled her mind every hour.

Further and further apart drifted husband and wife. She could not speak to him of the inner life, the new world opening before her—he would have listened with a sneer of

scorn, or at least with open indifference; and still less could he tell her of the letters that came to Como, and the wild, bad dreams of a possible future here in which he indulged.

Nor was it Mr. Fairfax's object to draw them more closely together. He foresaw, and he was quite right, that, so long as Kate felt the want of earthly love, so long would she seek for divine consolation. Her wealth, now expended in idle extravagance, might be utilised for the Church, and the restless soul find rest. From his point of view, perhaps from any point of view, he was right. Far better that Kate should be repentant and reconciled to heaven, that her wealth should go to support religious services and charities, than that she should remain cold, hardened, and estranged, and expend her riches in "riotous living." If she loved and believed and served God, could it matter in which church,

or under which form of faith, she served him? Could Evangelicalism have done more for her than make her penitent and faithful? By-and-by, when all the wandering sheep come home, and the Great Shepherd opens the eternal fold, will He ask by what road they came to the gate? in which language they asked admission? who taught them the new song no man can sing? I think not; I think all will be welcome and all equal there, who have trodden here the path of repentance and faith, no matter under what leader.

Kate had not seen Mr. Fairfax for long. He was to be in Rome that Winter, and when she had spoken of going there, Caryl had gladly consented.

They saw very little of each other. Each had their own train of thought, with which the other could have no sympathy. On one excuse or another, the correspondence between Caryl and Muriel had been carried on regularly, and in his last letter he had

ventured to hint at the possibility of his being in Rome that Winter. She was so accustoned now to think of Caryl as a dear friend that she longed to meet him again; and she said, when she answered, that what Herbert had told him was quite true, that they were going there themselves, and that she hoped they might meet.

So when Autumn was nearly over, Caryl went off to Corfu, and Kate to Florence; and Muriel, Miss Jerome, and Nellie started for Italy, by way of the south of France. But before all this occurred Charlie had gone down to Ropsley. His mother was there, older and colder than ever; years had only hardened her in her narrow belief; she had drawn the circle closer and closer, she had demanded, from those who associated with her, a higher and higher standard of belief, till they had wearied of her assumption of peculiar holiness, and fallen away one by one.

She was nearly alone now. Her children

had left her; only Herbert remained, and he was a source of perpetual grief to her. Not one of them had followed in the footsteps of their "blessed father," not one looked on her as a saint and elect. She had denied to them love and sympathy; they were denied to her now, when she needed them most. Her poor relations still burned incense before her shrine. She might even yet alter her will; who knew how it stood? They might have been put in for nice little sums, and, if they were neglectful, they might be taken out; or, on the other hand, if they were not already inserted, a codicil might be added, to reward their untiring devotion to her. Did she believe in their love? Hardly: she knew that, if she had been poor, they would have fallen away from her. Their "amens" to her extempore prayers would have been less loud; and their exclamations of pious wonder at "the great gift dear Sarah possessed of pouring out her spirit in extempore prayer,"

would have been far less warm and eloquent.

For Mrs. Evans either had, or fancied she had, a great gift of extemporary prayer, and this very gift was a source of great aggravation to her family and friends, who were perpetually finding themselves gibbeted in her addresses to the Almighty, either as sinners of the deepest dye, penitents of the most devout description, or elect and chosen vessels of grace; or, if they escaped a public statement of their most secret thoughts, they were sure to be mentioned either as about to travel or marry, or enter upon some business matter; in short, all their affairs, spiritual, personal, and temporal, were certain to be made the subject of a special clause, to their great annoyance, and sometimes injury. On one occasion, even the meek Alice had been stirred to wrath.

Mrs. Evans was not exceedingly particular as to the doctrines of the " saints of the

Lord" whom she invited to tea, toast, and devotions at her house; and on this evening a certain Brother Gibbon had been selected as the lion of the evening.

Of course he expounded, by the hour together, on the principle of every word in the Bible being literally true, and inspired in its English form, with a perfect oblivion of the fact that our Scriptures are only translations, and that the translators were not regarded as inspired, and did not always use the best word to express the meaning of the original. All this Brother Gibbon ignored (if he ever knew it), and having expounded himself into a virtuous state of frenzy with all except the elect, he proceeded to address the Almighty upon that subject, and to inform him who were and who were not "of the chosen."

Now, Brother Gibbon was essentially an unctuous man; he perspired, he groaned, he snuffled, and made himself, as Alice thought, excessively disagreeable in every

way. At last he began to specify those present by name; he prayed for Mrs. Evans as a prominent handmaid of the Lord, and went through all the others, certifying them in their proper places and degrees of holiness.

The party had been carefully selected from the "inner circle." Only Alice was present who was not of "the select society of the converted;" and she began to wonder if she should escape mention, when she heard Brother Gibbon, after a pause and groan, go on with the words,

"And if there is anyone here who is not of the number of thy handmaids—and surely there is one; but, Lord, we will name no names—remember there is yet time to have mercy, if she is indeed of the elect, and let her take her place amongst them; but, if not, then Thy will be done."

The astounding impudence of the concluding passage was too much for Alice, who started up from her knees and rushed

out of the room. She met Muriel next day, and complained of Brother Gibbon.

"Never mind, dear," said that stronger-minded young lady. "Brother Gibbon is an idiot! If I had the public praying for him, I should mention two or three things that would astonish his admirers, I suspect."

It was not to be wondered at that, with such ideas as Mrs. Evans had, she should alienate everyone except her relatives, who had something to gain. She passed most of her time, by choice alone, in her dressing-room; and there Charlie found her, when he came down to Ropsley to see Herbert.

She greeted him calmly, asked him if he had dined, and regretted Herbert's absence, who would not, she said, return till late.

"I had rather speak to you first," answered Charlie. "I do not think you can be aware of what is going on, or that, if you did, you would sanction it."

"There is nothing going on, that I am aware of, out of the regular routine."

"But there is. I tell you, mother, that Herbert is, I fully believe, acting the part of a villain."

"Not unlikely, Charles; we never know into what crimes the unregenerate heart may not be betrayed."

"If your doctrine is true, mother, the unregenerate heart cannot help itself; but what you can do is not to countenance these crimes."

"Most assuredly I would not do so; but what is the matter?"

"Do you know that Herbert met Caryl Trevor in Italy?"

"He mentioned having done so."

"Did he tell you that he was in correspondence with him?"

"No; but if it were so, it is no affair of mine."

"Then you do not know that he has given messages from Trevor to Muriel

Gore? More than that, he is actually forwarding letters for them."

"I was not aware of it, nor do I see what I have to do with it."

"Can you not see how dangerous, how fatal it is for Muriel to renew any intercourse with Trevor? She loves him still. Fickle as ever, he has now discovered that it is Muriel alone whom he loves. If they meet, it must be misery to both."

"Miss Gore is perfectly aware that Captain Trevor is a married man, and her love for him is sin."

"No, mother, not as it is now; she cannot forget how she loved him, and in the strength of that memory she forgives and loves him still. There is no trace of human passion in this, but they must not meet."

"What is all this to me?"

"Will you not interfere to prevent this correspondence? You have power over Herbert—power to forbid his doing any-

thing you object to, if not influence sufficient to induce him to give it up; but it will do just as well. I implore you to exert this power now. Compel Herbert to cease from, at all events, enclosing letters from Caryl to Muriel; you will—I am sure you will—and so place temptation out of Muriel's way."

Mrs. Evans remained cold and unmoved.

"I shall not interfere," she said. "Say what you please to Herbert; I shall take no part in it one way or the other."

Charlie bit his lip to prevent the words he would otherwise have spoken from coming forth from his heart, but at this moment Herbert entered, and Charlie turned to him.

"Delighted to see you, Herbert! I thought you were not coming home till late."

"I drove several miles off to see some friends, but found them out, so I returned at once. When did you arrive?"

"An hour or two ago. I came specially to see you."

"Really!—may I ask on what business?"

"I will explain in very few words. I came to remonstrate with you on the imprudence—I might even say the wickedness—of acting as go-between for Caryl Trevor."

Herbert repressed a start of surprise.

"Who told you this?" he asked.

"That is of no consequence. It is true, and you know it. Through your means Caryl is keeping up a correspondence with Muriel."

"There you are mistaken. No letters pass through me."

"You are not speaking the truth."

"Ask Muriel, if you doubt me; she will not deny it. Why do you come here to attack me in this way? I brought a message from Trevor, asking Muriel to forgive him. She wrote to tell him that she did, and he wrote to thank her. My part in

the play has been but a very minor one. If Muriel chooses to turn it into a sensation drama, it is no fault of mine."

Charlie was staggered. Could this be true? Had things really gone so far?

"Now, Charles," said Mrs. Evans, in her most steely voice, "what have you to say for yourself, coming here with idle accusations, to disturb the peace of a quiet household? If no better errand brings you here, may I request you to leave us? I have no wish for your presence or society."

Charlie flashed with anger as he answered,

"Mother, I am going. As I never found in you any sympathy with my efforts for good, or received the affection which I feel was my due, I am not disappointed that both have failed me now. You may live to regret that you have estranged your children's hearts, and stamped with gloom and sadness every remembrance of their home; but, as for me, I bid you farewell—

I shall return no more till you recall me."

He took up his hat and left the room. A shade seemed to fall upon it as he did so, and Mrs. Evans would have called him back then and there, had not pride restrained her; the better impulse passed away, and Charlie had left her for ever.

He was very heavy-hearted as he went down to the hotel on the beach. The low roll of the waves on the shingle, the thick darkness that brooded over the sea, through which the lights of the ships at anchor glimmered like lurid stars the sighing of the night wind over the sandy shore,—all harmonized with his thoughts.

Muriel writing to Caryl!—having letters from him! Where would it end? He did not like to ask her the question why she wrote to Trevor. As she had never named it, even to Nellie, she might consider it an impertinence.

He had heard rumours that Caryl had grown a reckless man of the world, pur-

suing his own course, cost what it might. He had an uncomfortable foreboding that the visit to Rome would be, in more senses than one, a very unhappy one; yet he had no reason to urge against it, and no right to hope that Muriel would listen if he did. His heart was very heavy, and all the more so that he saw no way out of the tangled maze.

"God guard and shield her!" was his mental prayer; "for only He can do so now."

Mrs. Evans was more than usually eloquent and diffusive in family prayers that night. Did she, with a womanly, tender sympathy, pray for the sorely tried and tempted, that their feet might be kept from straying, and that they might not finally miss the path to their Father's home? Did she plead for mercy on the fallen and pity for the erring?

No. In her dark creed it mattered little if the elect did sin, still they were safe; if

the outcasts were holy and loving, firm in faith, and earnest in practice, still it could avail them nothing—they were lost without redemption.

And it is into this fearful distortion of the Gospel that so many of the extreme Calvinists have twisted the merciful words of Christ, and then rejoice, with the joy of fiends, over the ruin of the beings created only to be consigned to eternal torture.

No wonder that Mrs. Evans's children fled in dismay from the family devotions; not even Herbert would attend them, and she was left alone to inform the Almighty and the servants that her son Charles had arrived, with his heart hardened, as usual, and his words even more so, that he deserved the heaviest punishments which could be reserved for any breaches of the Fifth Commandment, and that, though she hoped he might not be "visited," yet she was almost sure he would, and she should give thanks and ascribe glory to

the justice which would strike him down.

The servants were too much accustomed to her lucubrations to pay much attention to the subject of them. The butler simply remarked, as he headed the procession to the servants' hall,

"Missis swore worse than usual to-night."

CHAPTER VII.

THE RECONCILIATION.

The wave is breaking on the shore,
The echo fading from the chime,
Again the shadow moveth o'er
The dial-plate of time.

WHITTIER.

OCTOBER came at last, and Muriel, Nellie, and Miss Jerome started for Italy. They did not linger in Paris, but pressed on to Lyons.

"Paris is too English for me," said Muriel. "I like to get quite away. I breathe more freely here. Just look at that glorious river, how blue and bright it rolls along, till it meets the sister stream! Don't you like it better than the Thames, Nellie?"

"I suppose I ought to say no, and be patriotic, but truth compels me to say yes. The Thames is all very well in a mercantile point of view, 'below bridge,' as they say, and pretty, in a sentimental one, up by Richmond; but too crowded to suit me, and so very 'snobbish' (that *is* such an expressive word)."

Muriel laughed.

"I cannot tell," she said, "why we are as a people so wedded to England. It cannot be the scenery—we come abroad if we wish to refresh our eyes with 'the beauties of nature.' Nellie, don't you detest that sentence? It cannot be the cookery, for our great object is to get up a humble imitation of French *entrées*; it cannot be the climate, for we all abuse it; it cannot be the religion, for no one knows exactly what that is; and it is the dearest and dingiest country in Europe, I verily believe."

"My dear," said Miss Jerome, "it is

the sentiment—we are all so proud of being English."

"And why, Jerrie? I quite agree with you that it is the sentiment, but what ground is there for it? I do not think we are, as a people, one bit more clever, more religious, more brave, or more moral than other nations."

"My love," said Miss Jerome, "just look at the French!"

"At the Parisians, you mean; but, dear Jerrie, we should not judge a nation by the people of its great cities. Wherever men are crowded together, life is hard, and vice abounds; sin from poverty, and sin from riches—the two great extremes meet in great cities. We must look at the average character of the country at large. I think London is the wickedest place in the world. Some say New Orleans and New York beat it. If they do, they have only followed in our footsteps. I am so glad to be out of it; one gets as it were contaminated there

with physical and moral dirt, and to-morrow we shall go back a century or two, as we ramble about Avignon. Nellie, you *will* enjoy that."

What Nellie most enjoyed was to see Muriel's return to her usual good spirits; besides, they were safely beyond the reach of those dreadful letters which had come so regularly from Italy. They passed on to Orange, and halted for a few hours to see the Roman arch and the theatre, and Nellie began to feel the enthusiasm for antiquities which is sure to develop itself amidst such grand remains of the mighty past; but, as Muriel had predicted, Nellie did enjoy Avignon, and Miss Jerome supped her fill of horrors in the palace of the Popes and the ill-omened Glacière.

"My dears," she said, addressing her companions as they emerged once more into the sun-lighted streets, "this is the way to learn history. I shall always have it clearly in my head, now, how many Popes

reigned here, and all the dreadful scenes of the French Revolution. I am sure it would be a good plan to conduct classes of young ladies all round Europe; they would learn geography and history in a twelvemonth."

"And when you have seen Rome, you will add the history of art to that. Nellie, you are not too old to improve; there are hopes of you yet."

"Of course there are," said Nellie. "My dear Muriel, my mind is expanding rapidly; mine will be a gigantic intellect by the time I go home."

Nismes and Arles were passed, each leaving in their minds pleasant memories of happy walks and drives; and, strangest sight of all, the ruined and deserted town of Les Baux. Marseilles was reached at last. Muriel had grown more and more joyous as they neared the city, and her first act on reaching the hotel was to send to the post.

"You know I gave my address here,"

she said to Nellie. "We have lingered on the road, so we shall probably find letters from England."

True enough, there were several letters for all of them, and Nellie's sharp eyes caught sight of one with a foreign stamp. Her heart misgave her that it was from Caryl.

"Then Muriel has told him our route," she thought. "If not, he would have naturally concluded we came by Mont Cenis. Can he be coming to meet us? I trust and hope not."

But nothing justified Nellie's fears. No Caryl Trevor made his appearance at the crowded *table-d'hôte*, and yet Muriel was as gay as ever. Still Nellie's fears were true —the letter was from Caryl Trevor. Lady Beauvilliers had gone to Florence, and Trevor was in Corfu, amusing himself with shooting excursions.

He wrote cheerfully and kindly; there was not a word that his wife might not

have read, for he spoke of their proposed visit to Rome in the Winter, and his hopes that he might once meet Muriel, in language so calm and friendly that no one could have dreamed of the fiery sinful passion that lay hidden underneath.

It was November before they had traversed the Corniche road and reached Genoa, and thence by slow stages to Florence; and here they took up their abode in the Albergo d'Italia, overlooking the Arno.

Miss Jerome was fairly lost in wonder at all the sights she had seen, and would have been very happy, had it not been for a huge box, containing most of her worldly goods in the dress line, whose bottom and sides were given at times to come out. Noah's Ark, as Muriel had named it, was a source of trouble and laughter to them all; and now Miss Jerome was resolved, before she entered on a round of sight-seeing, to have this said Noah's Ark properly strengthened, to support the trial of the journey to Rome.

In pursuance of this object, she returned home early from the Pitti Palace, and after a light refreshment of wine and biscuits, retired to her room to empty Noah's Ark, preparatory to its being sent to some box-mender, recommended by the head-waiter, who spoke very intelligible English. She was pulling out and piling up on the chairs and table all sorts of garments, when there came a gentle tap at the door.

"Come in!" cried Miss Jerome—"that is, *entrez*—oh, dear! I mean *entrate*—that is, if you are not the waiter, *non uomo*," she added emphatically.

"No, *amica carissima*," replied a soft, sad voice—"*Sono Katerina*."

"Lord bless me!" exclaimed Miss Jerome, jumping up and brandishing a petticoat she had just abstracted from the depths of the invalid box. "Can it be you, Kate? Oh dear! oh dear! how wicked you have been, and how ill you look!"

It was indeed Kate, but how changed and altered! She was plainly, though richly, dressed; her bright colour was gone, her flashing eyes were calm, and cold, and dreamy, and she looked as if a heavy weight of sorrow was laid upon her.

"Yes, dear old Jerrie, it is Kate—your naughty, wild, troublesome Kate. Won't you kiss me once more, dear? I know I don't deserve it; I have been very wicked. Oh! if I could be forgiven, and at rest!"

"Sit down," said Miss Jerome, her eyes filling with tears. "You are ill and nervous, my love, as you used to be—there, there!" and she laid Kate's head on her faithful old breast, as she had done so many times in her childhood. "Don't cry so, dear; I am not going to scold you—there, there, there!" and she rocked her recovered darling like a fractious baby.

Kate sobbed bitterly, but she soon made an effort to recover herself, and said through her tears,

"It is nothing, Jerrie, nothing—only the past came so vividly before me when I saw your dear old face again. I am so glad to see you first and alone. Where are the others?"

"At the Pitti Palace still, I suppose. But how did you know we were here?—how did you find us out? Where is Captain Trevor?"

"I'll answer your last question first, Jerrie. He is in Greece, or, rather, in the Greek Islands. I saw you all in the Pitti Palace, though you did not see me. I ordered my courier to follow you; he saw to which hotel you came; he said you came alone, and I set off directly, hoping to catch you before Muriel and Nellie returned."

"And are you happy, Kate, with Caryl Trevor?"

"Happy! I suppose I ought to be; he lets me do just as I like. I have plenty of money, and a high position—what could

I ask more? Hearts are out of fashion, Jerrie, now-a-days."

"But I mean, do you love each other very much?"

"We *did;* but love like ours does not last. We are civil to each other—more cannot be expected. I have ceased even to wish it. Don't pity me, Jerrie. I don't deserve it. I wrecked, wilfully and knowingly, the happiness of another, and I suffer a just penalty."

Poor Miss Jerome was puzzled what to say.

"Do you intend to see Muriel?" she asked at last.

"Yes, of course I do. I know she forgives me. It would not be Muriel if she did not. Why should we not meet as friends?"

"Oh! no reason at all, of course, my love; only that it might be very painful to her."

"It may be; but it will be a passing

pain. She will be the better for it afterwards. I shall suffer more when I see the woman I wronged. May it be accepted as part of my atonement?"

Miss Jerome grew more and more bewildered. Was this Kate?—her gay, reckless Kate? She did not exactly know what line to take, and was very glad when a knock at the door, and the voice of the "cameriera" announced that the Signoras had returned, and were in the *salon*.

"I'll go down and speak to them, Kate, my dear," she said hurriedly. "You stay here. We must not be too sudden. Muriel is not strong; and Nellie is very hasty. Wait here till I come back."

"As long as you like, Jerrie. But let us have it over as soon as you can manage it."

Miss Jerome looked sadly at her once brilliant pupil, and left the room. All the way down the long staircase she meditated as to how she should break the news of their visitor; and when she entered the

salon she had not arrived at any conclusion.

Muriel and Nellie were both there, eating their luncheon, and exultant over a purchase of turquoise studs and brooches of the purest blue.

"Look here!" cried Muriel, as she entered, "are they not charming? We fell in love with them in a shop on the Ponte Vecchio—the dearest, quaintest old shop—and I never saw so clear and lovely a blue. Nellie, I really think I shall go back for that other set."

"I would, if I were you," answered Nellie, oracularly, putting her head on one side to get a fresh view of the studs, after the manner of women in general, when they are lost in profound consideration.

Muriel rose and went to a table in the remote corner of the long room, for the purpose of writing a note to send by a *facchino*, and Miss Jerome began to make a series of hideous grimaces at Nellie, intended to convey a desire for private speech

with her. Nellie stared at first, but suddenly caught the meaning of these facial gymnastics.

"Come to the window, Jerrie," she said. "I want you to see how picturesque that old bridge is, and the deep shadow it throws on the river below."

Miss Jerome went to the window, and, leaning forward as if to look out, said in an emphatic whisper,

"She's here—actually here in my bedroom."

"She?—who?" asked Nellie.

"Kate, or Lady Beauvilliers, or whatever she calls herself."

"Kate! Good heavens, what brings her here? Has she no shame in her?"

"Oh! yes, my dear. I do believe she is thoroughly ashamed of herself; and then she is so miserable."

"And serve her perfectly right. I hope she is. But what does she want?"

"To see Muriel."

"Does she? Well, I call that very cool, not to say downright impertinent! Send her off, Jerrie—tell her not to come here disturbing us."

"My dear, she won't go; and really she is so changed, so sad and quiet."

"And you believe in her, I suppose? Miss Jerome, I am ashamed of you."

"I daresay you are right, my dear; but that is not the question now. I want to know what is to be done?"

"Done!—why, send her away, of course. If you won't, I will."

"But Kate is so obstinate—she always was—she will see Muriel—she will persist till she does."

"And she shall," said the voice of Muriel, close behind them.

She had come up to them with the note in her hand to show Nellie; so intent were they that they had not heard her, and she caught the two last sentences. Miss Jerome positively jumped in her alarm.

"Oh! Muriel, my dear, forgive me! I could not help it. She came upon me suddenly."

"There is nothing to forgive, Jerrie; it is very natural she should wish to see old friends again. Where is she? I will go and see her."

"In my room," said Miss Jerome, faintly.

Muriel looked steadily at both her friends, as if to say, "Do not be afraid; I can bear it." She was pale as death, and the blood was all but starting from her lip, where she had set her teeth to keep down a rising sob, but she walked out of the room with head erect and nostrils expanded, and a step as firm and proud as if she were commanding a legion.

We none of us know what martyrdoms are going on all around us every day and every hour in private life—martyrdoms all the more cruel that they are prolonged, and that they touch the soul, not the frail shell of humanity. What was the short

agony in the Colosseum?—one fierce rush of the beasts of prey, and pain and sorrow were ended, and the Golden Gates were opened, and the captive was for ever free. That was the physical pain of an hour, to end in such a sure and certain victory. But oh! for the long and weary years when the mind is on the rack, when memory of the past and fear for the future blend with present pain, and when we must smile under the torture, and go on our way as if all was well, and the end of it we know not.

Nellie looked after her friend sadly and indignantly.

"I wish my lady had me to deal with instead of Muriel," she said. "I would give her a lesson she would not soon forget. I wonder if she knows that Muriel has heard from Captain Trevor?"

"You mean that message which Herbert gave her?"

"I mean a great deal more, Jerrie—the letters that have passed of late."

"My dear, you don't mean to say those foreign letters came from Captain Trevor?"

"I do; she has not told me, but I am sure of it. Herbert began the mischief, and it has gone on getting worse ever since."

"It is all very sad, but I am afraid Kate does not know, because she said she knew Muriel forgave her—it would not be Muriel if she did not—that was her reason for thinking so."

"Yes, but it is just possible that she may be aware that her husband and Muriel are reconciled, and yet not consider that the reconciliation extended to herself. We'll hope for the best, Jerrie. Did she say if Captain Trevor was here in Florence?"

"No; she said he was in Greece."

"Thank heaven for that! I hope he may stay there, but I doubt it. My dear Jerrie, the more we keep clear of those people the better; it can do no good to renew friendship with them, and may do

harm, and I only trust that we may see no more 'of them; but I am sadly afraid that Muriel is too forgiving for her own happiness."

And what had passed upstairs, meantime? Kate had awaited Muriel's arrival with a beating heart; she recognised at last all the evil she had done. Mr. Fairfax had had a glimpse of the past, and from what he knew he spoke boldly, and did not spare her. If he could once fix upon her mind the idea that she had sinned so deeply that she was lost, he knew that she would turn only too gladly to any source of forgiveness, and this, it was his care to impress upon her, could only be found in the "one true Church"; and he had succeeded in bringing her into a depressed and morbid state, in which he intended her to remain till he went to Rome, where they would meet again.

But this very morbid state rendered her acutely sensitive to anything connected

with the past, and nervously anxious to cancel it as far as possible, and to hear she was forgiven by those she had wronged. Not that her conduct to Muriel was her only, or perhaps her greatest sin, but it was the one which had most effect on her whole present life; and as she found that Caryl lamented over the past, and longed for the forgiveness of the woman who had loved him so truly, she was anxious to take every step that would lead to a restoration of friendship.

She knew nothing of the messages sent and received, or of the letters that had passed; she had the most perfect confidence in Muriel; all tinge of jealousy had passed away, in the deeper feelings which now occupied her mind, and she listened for Muriel's coming with a momently increasing anxiety.

At length the door opened. Kate looked up, and saw Muriel once more. The girl had changed to the woman, but Kate would

have known her anywhere, and she rose up, saying as she did so,

"Will you shake hands with me, Muriel? I know how cruelly I wronged you; but it is so long ago now, and I have my reward."

Muriel took her hand in silence. She could not speak. She only looked intently at Kate, and grieved to see how the bright, brilliant beauty, the companion of her early days, was changed.

"Would you recognize me?" asked Kate, smiling sadly.

"Not if I had met you by accident. You are looking very ill."

"I am not physically ill, Muriel."

"You are not unhappy, I hope? I am sure Caryl"—she hesitated—"Captain Trevor, I mean,—would not be unkind!"

"No; but there is no love between us. It is my fault, I believe. I ought to have known that the day would come when the first blush of passionate love should be over, that he would look back upon the

past, and cease to respect me and to love me; and I, too, felt at last how infinitely weak he had been. So I suppose it was mutual, and we grew tired of each other, and life was dull, and we both sought amusement wherever we could find it. Muriel, if we are to meet as friends, do not question me as to that past."

Muriel started, and looked sharply at her.

"I know what you are thinking of, Muriel, but you are mistaken. Society knows of nothing against me. You need not be afraid to be seen with me. The world knows the worst of me when it knows how I acted towards you—the rest is between myself and my God!"

"There let it rest," said Muriel. "I do hope we shall meet as friends; it will be better on all accounts. Captain Trevor wishes it too."

It was Kate's turn to look sharply at Muriel. How did she know that? But

she cared nothing now what Trevor did, or how he amused himself; and if he could find happiness in Muriel's friendship and Muriel's society, why, so much the better. All the reparation she could make to both was not to interfere, and, even as she looked at Muriel, she felt that she could implicitly trust her.

"Then we are all agreed," she answered, calmly. "I suppose you are going on to Rome? So are we. At least Captain Trevor is to join me there about Christmas time. I conclude he will have finished his sporting expedition to Albania by that time, but I hardly ever hear from him. I shall remain here till I receive his directions to leave."

"I am glad," said Muriel, and she spoke truly, "that we shall all meet in Rome, and that we have met here first. Let the past be really the past. There is no reason why we should make ourselves additionally miserable by unkindness and estrangement."

"Thank you, dear; I knew you would say so. Believe me, if I could live my life over again, it would be a very different one. I do sincerely repent of all the wrong I have done to many, especially to you, but it lightens the burden to hear you say that you at least forgive."

"I do, Kate—I do indeed. There, now we are quite friends again, are we not?—and now will you come downstairs and see Nellie Heathcote?"

She led the way, and Kate followed in silence. When they entered the *salon*, they found Nellie and Miss Jerome there, Nellie looking her stateliest (or sulkiest, as some people translated it), and Miss Jerome in the state of mind so graphically described as "shivering in her shoes."

Muriel's appearance somewhat soothed them. She was pale and quiet—that was all; and Kate, too, was perfectly calm. She advanced instantly to Nellie.

"You remember me, don't you?" she said, humbly.

"Oh! yes, very well," said Nellie, with a snort and toss of her head.

"I was very glad to see Kate," said Muriel, anxiously. "I am sure you are too."

"Don't be too sure of anything," replied Nellie, sharply; "but, of course, if you have no quarrel with Lady Beauvilliers, I have none."

"Thank you, Nellie," said Lady Beauvilliers, with her wintry smile. "I like you very much; you are a good, true friend, and if I had wronged you, you would not resent it half as much as you would for anybody you loved. I deserve all your anger, Nellie. I don't deny it, and Muriel is well worth fighting for."

Nellie was pacified at once.

"If you acknowledge you were all in the wrong, there is nothing more to be said."

"That's right, Nellie dear," interposed Miss Jerome; "let us be friends. Dear me, it is so much better, and the world is so

short. Really, my loves, there is no time for quarrelling—not but what Nellie is very right—you really were *too* bad, Kate, and I am ashamed of you, and always shall be; but as it is over now, I am very glad, and I do hope this will be a warning to you, and that you will never do so again."

This address was too much for the gravity of anyone of her hearers, and they laughed aloud.

"Bear with me just a little time," said Kate, when they had once more recovered their gravity. "I shall not trouble you long."

"You look ill," said Nellie; "but not so bad as all that. You are not going to die, are you?"

"No, Nellie—God forbid! I need time for repentance and atonement. You will [illegible]y soon. Don't ask me anything now."

"[illegible]y well," replied Nellie. "You [illegible]ays doing something extraordi-

nary. We will wait in patience for the new *dénouement.*"

"And be kind to me meanwhile," said Kate imploringly.

"Of course," broke in Muriel. "Don't mind Nellie. She's Irish, you know."

Lady Beauvilliers smiled. Nellie shook her head doubtfully, and poor Miss Jerome, who had a faint impression that the new reconciliation was somewhat imperilled by Nellie's downright speeches, felt it incumbent upon her to interfere in the character of peacemaker, and said solemnly,

"We will all be very kind, my dear, Nellie included—as Muriel says, you must not mind her—it is nothing at all."

"Thank you, Jerrie," said Nellie laughing; the dangerous point was rounded, and the smooth haven reached.

They were all friends again, and they were to meet in Rome, and be so still, and "Captain Trevor would be so pleased." Kate spent the afternoon with her recover-

ed friends, and made herself, as she could do, excessively agreeable. She was very quiet, very depressed, very dreamy; but even that she was so, took off the infinite pain that it would have been to Muriel to see her gay and triumphant.

They all pitied her, they could not help it; she was unhappy, no one could help seeing that; and though she might have brought it upon herself, it was not the less sad. But all the same, Nellie, keen and clear-headed, regretted the meeting and distrusted the future; besides which, she had a notion that anything begun by Herbert Evans must end badly, and this reconciliation, as far as regarded Caryl, was entirely his doing. Certainly he had not brought about the meeting with Kate at Florence, but Nellie doubted if Muriel would have met Kate so kindly, had she not known that it was Caryl's desire there should be peace; and she wrote a letter to Charlie, that very night before she retired to rest, in which

she explained to him her ideas and opinions on the point. That Charlie agreed with her is certain, for the very evening on which he received her letter, he resolved, *coûte que coûte*, to go to Rome that Winter.

"I may be of no use," he thought. "But if not, I shall always be able to remember that I did my best for Muriel."

CHAPTER VIII.

ALL ROADS LEAD TO ROME.

Stranger! what though these sounds and sights be grandest
  Of all that on earth's surface can be found,
Remember that the place whereon thou standest,
  Be thy creed what it may, is holy ground.

* * * * * * *

There where the stately Barberini palace,
  Like some new Nimrod's fabric, heavenward climbs,
Enduring monument of Christian malice,
  By outrage wrested from the Pagan times.

Where, lulled and drowsy with the distant hum,
  The sentinel keeps watch upon the town,
And, from the heights of old Janiculum,
  On Father Tiber's yellow face looks down.

Where, in their southern grace, the moonbeams play
  On Caracalla's tesselated floors,
And rescue from the garish light of day
  The Colosseum's ghostly corridors.

Where Raphael and all his great compeers
  Art's form divine in giant mould have cast,
The very air is heavy with the years,
  The very stones are vocal of the past!

H. C. MERIVALE.

DURING the ten days of Muriel's stay in Florence, she saw Kate but twice

more, yet when they parted, on the evening preceding her journey to Rome, it was with the full understanding that they should meet in Rome as friends. Charlie, as we know, had been duly informed by Nellie of all that was passing, and though he much regretted the meeting with Lady Beauvilliers, he could see in it nothing of actual blame; "but," he added, "expect me in Rome as soon as I hear of Trevor's arrival there; and should you by accident meet the Count della Villareale, be sure and make friends with him."

In consequence of this, Nellie made sundry inquiries of Muriel as to the Count, whom she had never seen.

"Yes, dear," was Muriel's answer. "He is very charming, and so kind and good; I have seen him several times in Florence, but I don't fancy he is here now. I sent to the hotel he always goes to, as soon as we arrived, to ask where he was, but the

message sent was that he was not in Florence then, though expected daily.

Strangely enough, that very evening, at the *table-d'hôte*, Muriel's next door neighbour, a foreigner, overheard her say to Nellie, "Look at that gentleman nearly opposite to us; you asked me what Count della Villareale was like—well, there is a great resemblance to him in that man."

Her neighbour turned round and said courteously in French,

"Does the Signora know the Count della Villareale?"

"Yes, indeed I do," replied Muriel in the same language. "And I am very sorry not to find him in Florence."

"The Signora is English?"

"Certainly, Signor."

"And a devoted admirer of Il Santo Padre?"

"Personally yes, politically no!"

"The Signora would not regret that Rome should be united to Italy?"

"Not at all, I should be very glad. It seems to me that a priest of the Church of Christ, retaining a temporal position by appeal to arms, and those arms wielded by a heterogeneous collection of men of every nation, is a very great anomaly."

"The Signora expresses herself perfectly. Such were and are the sentiments of Count della Villareale."

"I am quite aware of that. He is a true Italian."

"Then the Signora would not be surprised to find the Count acting on behalf of Italy?"

"Not at all. I should expect it."

"And possibly sympathize with his hopes?"

"Yes, undoubtedly."

"But the Signora is going to Rome—she will be too wise to express such sentiments there?"

At that moment it struck Muriel that

this stranger might be a Papalino spy, and she drew up, saying,

"I have no reason to conceal any sentiments of mine; I never interfered in politics, and never should."

The Italian smiled.

"You distrust me," he said, earnestly; "but I will prove to you that you have no cause. The Count is a friend of yours, and you wish to see him—he wishes to see you. He told me that if in Florence I met an English lady named Gore, who was to be there at the end of October or beginning of November, I was to give her an address in Rome where he would be heard of. I came here only to-day; I saw your name in the book; I heard you speak of the Count. You are Miss Gore—are you not?"

"I am. You will pardon me, I know, but your questions alarmed me."

The Italian looked round, and, seeing the waiters busy at a little distance, took out his pocket-book and gave Muriel a

piece of paper, on which was written the name,

Ettore di Morcini,
Pittore,
531, *Via della Ripetta,*
(Terzo Piano).

"Is this a friend of the Count's?" Muriel asked.

"No, Signora; but he will know where the Count is."

Muriel thanked him warmly, and, as they rose to leave the *salon*, the Italian, bending towards her, said,

"It may be that he can serve you, or it may be that you can serve him—one or other it must be. *Addio, Signora, a rividerla a Roma.*"

It was rather a puzzle to Muriel and Nellie, when they discussed this, as to who Ettore di Morcini could be, and Nellie decided that there was "something up."

"Plots and plans, Muriel dear, depend upon it. It's an elegant style of Fenian-

ism, only no one knows exactly what those gentlemen want, and the Italians are quite clear about it. '*Roma per Italia!*' and I hope they'll get it."

It was a lovely morning when next day they started for Rome. Every mile of the way was a new delight to Nellie and Miss Jerome, whose joy culminated to its highest pitch as they passed Cortona, and came on the ancient battle-field of Thrasimene.

She gazed out of the carriage-windows on the calm lake and the olive-trees, and the low hills around; and when the train ran into the tunnel, and the scene was shut in from view, she threw herself back, exclaiming breathlessly,

"I understand Roman history at last! I never really believed in it before—it was all so very long ago, but I am quite sure that Hannibal lived and fought here!"

Her companions both laughed. Muriel said,

"You will believe in Romulus and

Remus, and all the Kings, Emperors, Consuls and Senators, when you have lived a month in Rome. I am not sure that you will not believe in the gods of Rome, when you see their ruined temples—only fortunately there is early church-history to study, which will counteract the effect of heathenism."

"My dear," answered Miss Jerome, "I shall have to divide my time into portions —so many hours Pagan antiquities, so many hours Christian remains, so many—"

"*Halte là!*" cried Nellie; "you will never survive it all! I intend to study nothing and enjoy everything!"

Miss Jerome was about to argue the point, when their arrival at Perugia, where they were to spend a couple of days, diverted them from the subject.

At last Rome was reached. It was night when the train ran into the dirty and disreputable station, which is the modern entrance to the "Eternal City."

Nellie's English love of liberty had been roused at the frontier station by the strict examination of the passports, and she declared it felt like going into "prison."

Muriel was used to the process, and took it coolly; but Miss Jerome, who at first thought that they were all arrested, and about to be sent to the dungeons of the Inquisition, declared that nothing but the desire to improve her mind by a visit to Rome would have induced her to submit to the indignity. Luckily she was soothed down by the great civility with which the officials declined even to open the baggage.

"So considerate, my dear," she said. "Really the Pope must have been told how dreadfully it rumples one's things to have them tossed about."

The good old lady was quite unaware of the virtue of a mystic slip of paper which Muriel had shown to the head official, that most convenient *lascia passare*, which used

to exempt all baggage from examination.

At last they deposited themselves, and their *impedimenta*, inside and outside, a huge vehicle, much resembling the hackney-coach of old times, and jolted off into the city.

"And we really are in Rome?" said Nellie. "This is a horribly prosaic way of entering upon such classic ground. We ought to be in a triumphal car, with a coachman in a *toga*."

Who does not know Rome? And to those who do not, no words can convey the subtle spell that creeps over the mind, and renders citizens of every land—in heart, at least—citizens of Rome.

> "Rome her faithful votaries enthrals
> With all the memories that breathe and burn
> Within the magic circle of her walls."*

It is true, too, as the same author eloquently writes,

*H. C. Merivale.

Around, above, beneath she weaves her spells,
And priest and poet vulgarise in vain;
Who once within her fascination dwells
Leaves her with but one thought—to come again.
So cast thine obol into Trevi's fountain,
Drink of its waters, and returning home,
Pray that by land or sea, by lake or fountain,
All roads alike may lead at last to Rome."

Muriel awoke next morning with all the old charm strong upon her. She could breathe in that light air, she felt happier in that bright sunshine, trouble and annoyance were left behind in the foggy island over the dreary sea. She was prepared fully to enjoy herself, and went to every place of amusement and sight-seeing.

"This is charming!" said Nellie, gazing out at the broad Piazza di Spagna. "How clean and cheerful everything looks! and what a delicious air! I daresay there are dirty holes and corners somewhere. Ruins should not be too clean. But this delightful square, or oval, or whatever you call it, and that fountain splashing away so

find time to go to the Via della Ripetta. At last she and Nellie took their way there. No. 531 was a huge old house, with a wide yet gloomy entrance, and a stone staircase, the dirt of which was quite sufficient to prove to Nellie the actual existence of the holes and corners she had suspected.

There was no porter on the lower floor, the staircase seemed as open to all as a public street, and Muriel and Nellie mounted it slowly, till they arrived at the third floor. Here they found themselves on a landing-place between two doors, and the one on the right hand had a card nailed upon it, with the name "Ettore di Morcini." They rang the bell. The shutter of a small grating in the door was thrown back, and a voice asked,

"*Chi e?*"

"*E il Signor di Morcini in cesa?*" asked Muriel.

"He is much occupied," was the reply,

in Italian. "Who shall I tell him has asked to see him?"

Muriel put her card through the grating. It was taken, and the shutter was again closed, the voice of the invisible saying,

"*Aspettate un momentino.*"

"How delightfully mysterious!" remarked Nellie. "Now this is just what a Roman call ought to be."

"It is the way they have here," answered Muriel; but at this moment the noise of bolts and bars being undrawn was heard, the door opened, and a man stood before them, dressed in a holland blouse, with an embroidered velvet cap on his head.

Muriel looked at him for one moment, and then said,

"Is it possible? You here?"

"I am Ettore di Morcini," was the answer, aloud. "Come in, dear Miss Gore, so glad to see you," was the low-voiced greeting.

They entered, and found themselves in a painter's studio, a half-finished picture on the easel.

"I did not know you painted," said Muriel, looking around her.

"Nor do I call myself an artist," was the answer; "but I paint well enough to answer to my character. I am studying art, Miss Gore."

Muriel laughed.

"I think I can guess it all," she said. "But let me introduce to you my friend Miss Heathcote. You may safely trust her, I assure you."

"English honour is proverbial," said the Count, bowing. "Yes, Signorina Muriel, I am here, but, as I am proscribed, not under my own name. My presence is necessary, and hitherto I have escaped suspicion. I have not been here since I
a boy. There is no one to recognize
nd at present I am safe. There is
one person who could identify Morcini

the painter with Villareale the politician, and that is a Cardinal whom I knew well when very young in North Italy, but I keep out of the way of church ceremonies, and we are little likely to meet by accident. He could denounce me at once as plotting here, for we met a few years ago in Milan, and I spoke freely before him; but if he would, is another question. There are traitors everywhere, Miss Muriel, even round the Papal throne."

"But you will be able to come and see us, will you not?" said Muriel. "I am only so sorry that you cannot go with us to the galleries and churches."

"To the galleries, yes, and to the churches also, when no grand function is going on. Not to St. Peter's, or the Vatican—we should be too near the Cardinal there."

"What a charming man!" said Nellie, when, after an hour's pleasant chatting over Rome, political and artistic, they

took their leave. "I do love a mystery and a plot, and if only there could be a little revolution while we are here, I should be perfectly happy."

"Then ask Napoleon to remove those troops you see; nothing can be done whilst they remain. If only they could be recalled, Rome would be Italian in a week. The Count may plot and plan as he likes, but he knows it; only there may be eventualities which it is wise to be in readiness for. And now, Nellie, let's have a drive on the Campagna, and see the Alban Hills in their blue veil, and we shall be freshened up for the *soirée musicale* to-night. Mrs. Conway will gather all the lions round her shrine, especially ecclesiastical ones. We may even have a Cardinal or two, but we are certain of some Monsignors. Don't lend an ear to their persuasive eloquence, Nellie; I cannot have you added to the band of converts till they get some better

specimens to keep you company than they have had of late."

"I know two or three," laughed Nellie, "who would be no credit to any church, and, as that nice Mr. Mackeson (of St. Edmunds) said, 'are a good riddance of bad baggage.' Now, if he would go over, one might say something; and he is so near, it would not make much difference. I suppose he sees a difference; I cannot say I do—I mean, not if one goes as far as he does."

"I once asked Mr. Vivian," said Muriel, "if he thought a visit to Rome was dangerous to people who were hesitating between two opinions. He said no—not if they had any backs to their heads; by which he meant downright common-sense to balance imagination and a flighty intellect. Mr. Mackeson has been here, and came back safe, so we'll hope that he has adopted all the good, and left all the bad; and we'll hope, too, Nellie, that you have a back to your head. I think I shall examine you

phrenologically before the Christmas ceremonies, and if I find no proper development of the bump of common sense, I shall keep you away."

Nellie laughed.

"Let me go through it all, Muriel," she said. "Do you remember the little girl who asked her mamma to let her go to a dance, and her mother replied, 'My dear child, no. I have been to dances in my time, and I have seen the evil of them;' on which the sharp infant answered, 'And I want to see the evil of them too.'"

"Very well, Nellie; but I wash my hands of the consequences."

"I'll promise you one thing, Muriel—I won't be a convert this Winter, anyhow."

"Why not this Winter in particular?"

"Because I don't like the company I should have. There is that Mr. Walton, who has danced about from faith to faith four times, and now he is here, and 'going over for the last time positively,' so he

says; and then there is Lady Beauvilliers."

"Lady Beauvilliers, Nellie!"

"Yes, of course; all the world says so. I heard it spoken of at the reception two evenings ago. She is coming here, and so is Mr. Fairfax."

"She certainly did speak of Mr. Fairfax very enthusiastically. It may be true. Well, for her it will be best; she is changed, and for the better, and if it is the Catholic faith, as impressed upon her by that eloquent Mr. Fairfax, it will be well for her to take the decided step of placing herself under his direction."

"The greater the sinner, the greater the saint, I have heard," said Nellie. "What an eminent one Kate will be! I should not wonder if she renounced this wicked world altogether, and went into a convent."

It flashed into Muriel's mind that Caryl had in one of his letters hinted at this, and a wild thought came over her—would it free him legally from his marriage tie?

She was uncertain, but she fancied not; and then how lonely he would be! Bound to a woman in reality dead to him! How much he would need kindness and sympathy! And if Kate voluntarily left him, even for her soul's sake, she would have no right to object to that kindness and sympathy being showered upon him by one who had known him so many years.

She was thoughtful and silent during their drive, whilst Nellie drank in all the wondrous charm of the scene around them.

"There's nothing in all the world like the Campagna," she said, as they turned to go home. "If Cardinals were allowed to marry, I really think I should select the most delightful of them, and take up my permanent residence in Rome!"

CHAPTER IX.

GATHERING CLOUDS.

My love he stood at my right hand,
  His eyes were grave and sweet.
Methought he said, "In this far land,
  Oh, is it thus we meet?
Oh, last love!—oh, first love,
  My love with the true, true heart,
To think I have come to this your home,
  And yet we are apart!"

JEAN INGELOW.

AS Winter came on, the foreign population of Rome increased in number. Earliest amongst the arrivals in the week preceding Christmas was Mr. Fairfax. This English priest was not only an eloquent and earnest, but a most fascinating man. He was a Catholic *de pur sang*, the

scion of an old family, with a superb intellect, and the manners of a Sir Charles Grandison. He possessed, too, something better than all—a kind and gentle disposition and a warm heart. His personal influence was enormous, and the number of converts he made, a matter of wonder and speculation to his brother priests. He persuaded more than he convinced; and if he touched the heart rather than taught the head, who can blame him for using those personal advantages with which nature had gifted him to obtain the end he desired, and which he fully believed was for the best interests of the souls of those in whom he took an interest?

But if he never neglected the task of bringing into the fold any convert, however poor and humble, it must be confessed that his principal effort was to strengthen the influence of the Roman Church by the addition of those who possessed rank, wealth, or talent. All these three things repre-

sented power, and Fairfax was an ambitious man, for the Church as well as for himself. It was hinted that he had distant visions of being carried up the nave of the Great Basilica, with the peacock fans behind him; but this he always disclaimed, saying that if ever that dignity fell to the share of an Englishman, it would not be to him, but to another; and it was once said, in speaking of the two supposed rivals for the Pontifical throne, "Well, Fairfax would represent the temporal power, and Monsignor T—— the spiritual," the latter being as pale and ascetic-looking as Fairfax was handsome, bright-coloured, and dark-eyed. However, here he was in Rome, arranging for a course of sermons, which were to be the net that should catch much fish, and amongst them Kate, Lady Beauvilliers. It was nearly over now, he knew, only the ·t step remained to be taken, and yet she ; back.

'oor sinful, troubled soul," he thought,

"shrinking back from rest; but it must end here, and when it does, only one safe refuge remains—the cloister. I dare not trust her in the world again. The effect of what I have said might wear off, and then it would be worse for her than ever. Her wealth will be much to us, even if some is given, as it ought to be, to her husband. We must be just, and yet enough will remain." And he pondered deeply on the ways and means of having everything in readiness for this last momentous step.

"It must be done," was the reply of the French dignitary, in connection with a French convent some few miles from Florence, when he had heard the statement of Fairfax regarding Lady Beauvilliers. "No matter how, we need money sorely."

"It must be done," said Fairfax, quietly, but firmly; "I am aware of that. Yet kindly and gently, and with due consideration to the avoidance of all scandal. Captain Trevor has his own estates, and needs

nothing, it is true; but it will be wise that she should give to him a portion of her wealth."

The French priest was discontented; but Fairfax would not give way.

"And another point on which I must insist," he said, "is that Lady Beauvilliers is not hurried into a final decision. Send for your Mother Superior here to Rome; I will place Lady Beauvilliers under her care, to prepare her for her first confession. Thus she will gradually be accustomed to the idea of religious associations; and the rest must be left to the good Mother's tact and discretion. I have chosen your convent because there is work to do in it—the teaching of the young, the nursing of the poor and sick. No contemplative order would suit so active a mind as Lady Beauvilliers'."

All was thus arranged, and that very afternoon, on his return to his rooms, Mr. Fairfax found a note from Kate, announc-

ing her arrival at the Albergo di Spagna. In the evening he presented himself there, and found Kate, as he expected, ill and depressed. Mr. Fairfax met her with a kind smile.

"You are not looking well," he said. "I can hardly regret it. You have been thinking, and thinking deeply, that is quite sufficient cause for it."

"I have indeed," was the answer. "The struggle is nearly ended. I must find forgiveness and rest."

"I offer them to you," was the priest's reply. "But we will speak more fully of this by-and-by—to-night you are weary with travel."

"Very weary. I sometimes fancy that my life will not be a long one—that I shall never leave Rome."

"Your life in the world, your career of sin and sorrow, may end very soon, and a better life open before you—perhaps some presentiment of this is upon you. I have

told you what I think offers the only sure way of persevering till the blessed end of all is attained. Surely you could not look forward with dread to that?"

"No. I wish I could enter at once upon it, that I could summon up resolution to take the final step, but as yet it is in vain."

"Have you told Captain Trevor?"

"Not yet. I have simply hinted that I felt I must become a Catholic."

"And what was his reply?"

"'As you please—I shall not interfere.'"

"So far so good. You have no opposition to dread from him. Where is he now?"

"On the road to Rome, I suppose. He was to leave Corfu for Brindisi to-day."

"Then he will be here in eight and forty hours. I am glad of it. It is far better that whatever you do should be done under his eyes, as it were. Then we cannot be accused of underhand dealing."

The conversation was prolonged far into

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Jerrie!" said Kate sadly; "I
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in the characters and conversation of those around him, the going on of this very process, and only to strike when the iron was hot. He mixed largely in society, and by so doing had a sphere of operation denied to those who live out of the world; and his naturally kindly disposition and pleasant cheerful manners gave him openings to win the esteem and confidence of many who would have been afraid of a more stern and reserved man.

The day after the visit of Mr. Fairfax to Kate, she met Muriel and Nellie on the Pincian Hill. She stopped her carriage directly, and, finding that they were walking, ordered it to wait for her, and joined them.

"Where is Miss Jerome?" she asked.

"Very busy writing," replied Muriel.

"Letters to England?"

"No," broke in Nellie; "a book—actually a book! I gave it a name only yesterday: 'The Wanderings of an Industrious

Woman about Italy.' There have been so many idle and unprotected ones that a change was desirable."

"It is for private circulation only," said Muriel, "which I consider a mere excuse in general for bad grammar and careless construction, but in this case it really is modesty."

"Dear old Jerrie!" said Kate sadly; "I was a dreadful plague to her once upon a time. I must do something to make up for it. Tell her I will take fifty copies."

"She will be delighted," said Muriel. "We shall soon make up enough to cover the expense. I don't expect to derive any instruction from it; but, as it interests her, I give her all the help I can. It is a very harmless amusement."

"I wonder what the world would say if I wrote my life," mused Kate, leaning over the stone balustrade, and watching the sunset over the Vatican, behind Monte Mario.

"Some people read everything," said Nellie, "but I should think that your memoirs would have an exceptionally large circulation. Do you intend to write them?"

"No; my life is nearly ended now, and I have neither time nor inclination to do it."

"Nearly ended!" said Muriel. "Why, what do you mean? You are not seriously ill, are you?"

"No, not at all. I mean my life in the world; but do not say anything about it to Captain Trevor; he will be told in due time."

"More mysteries," said Nellie. "It is the air of Rome, I verily believe. But is Captain Trevor here?"

"Not yet, but he will be soon. Come and have a quiet evening with me. I want to introduce you to Mr. Fairfax."

"The celebrated Mr. Fairfax!" cried Nellie. "My dear Muriel, do let us go!"

"Certainly, Nellie dear. Yes, Kate, we

will come. I begin really to suspect something——"

"Would you be sorry?" Kate broke in.

"No—I believe it would be the happiest and best thing for you."

Kate flushed deeply. It was one bitter pang, and the last she ever felt on that subject; but under its influence she answered, hastily,

"And *you* advocate my leaving Caryl for ever?"

"Leaving Caryl? Far from that—that is not my meaning."

"You said it would be the happiest and best thing for me!"

"I did; but I meant becoming an earnest, devout Roman Catholic. I could not have meant anything else."

"And I meant the cloister," was Kate's answer. She felt that the reply had in reality no other meaning than her simply entering the Church of Rome, and she was

still unaware that Muriel had a glimpse of a further purpose.

They went that evening to the Albergo di Spagna, and Miss Jerome accompanied them, after a solemn protest against being converted by Mr. Fairfax. They found him there, and he professed his pleasure at being introduced "to those of whom he had heard so much from Lady Beauvilliers," especially the kind guardian of her early girlhood.

Miss Jerome blushed.

"And a very troublesome girl she was, my lord." (Miss Jerome had an idea that he was a sort of Church dignitary, and not choosing to call him your Reverence, fixed on this title as a happy medium of expressing merely secular respect.) "I never could manage her!"

"You should have had me to help you," said Fairfax, laughing.

"She never would mind her French and

German masters, so I am afraid she would not have attended to you."

"Oh! but she would. I should have taught her theology, and she would have been an apt pupil."

After this interchange of words Miss Jerome felt at her ease, and devoted herself to Kate, who was really delighted to see her.

Mr. Fairfax looked curiously at Muriel. "Clever and impulsive," he thought. "I suspect that she let her brains lie dormant when she was engaged to Trevor, or I would have backed her against Lady Beauvilliers."

He talked long to her; but, with his acute sense, he soon found that, just at this time, religion was not uppermost, so he spoke of art, and antiquity and lastly of Caryl. He watched the flushing cheek, and drew his own conclusions.

"So much the better," he thought. "Captain Trevor will offer no opposition.

There is consolation for him here; and yet that woman is a true woman. It will be an awful temptation for her! Would to God I had the guarding of her! No cloister for her. Life in the world, to show the power and purifying effect of the Catholic faith, and so win over souls. Well, we shall see, we shall see."

He felt an honest interest in her; her life had been a sad one. Love was, he felt, so necessary to her, and she had never known it, except as a passing and painful dream. When it came in its full force, when the man she loved stood alone in the world, and turned to her to find consolation, how would it be with her? What deep principle had she within her to strengthen her in the hour of trial? He longed to know, and he tried to trace it. The conversation turned on the Catacombs.

"Do you not feel," he said, "as you tread those dark, narrow paths, and find the very silence around you almost too sacred

to be broken by idle words, how blessed is the sleep of saint and martyr? For you believe they sleep till the Judgment day, do you not?"

"I cannot exactly define my belief. I am sure they are at rest somewhere."

"And rest is a blessing in itself. The daily fight against our foes, spiritual and temporal, is so hard."

"I am afraid I do not fight very much; I yield, and then regret it."

"That is because your mind is indolent. You do not call upon all its powers to aid you. The occasion does not seem great enough to call for a supreme effort; but, if ever you were to realize that a fearful temptation was upon you—that on the decision of that hour rested Heaven and Hell, then would you find an unseen tower of strength —not in fear, but in love?"

"I don't understand you."

"Because you do not understand yourself. You have strong affections—what-

ever you love, you love deeply and devotedly. You are not an Atheist; you love the God you believe in—you must do so. In that terrible hour would you not put the dark temptation from you?—and, because you dare not forfeit the right to love your Saviour, and to be loved by Him, sacrifice the dearest wish of your heart—the most worshipped idol enthroned there?"

"I don't know; I hope so—but I am not sure. I might give way—I distrust myself; I am afraid I do not love and believe as you think I do."

"You do not know how much or how little you do."

"But I am not likely to be tempted so hardly as that. It could only be through human love, and I am getting too old for that now."

"For a new love perhaps—for an old one no."

Muriel again coloured crimson.

"Remembrance is not love," she said, slowly.

"With you it is the veil behind which lurks love. But, Miss Gore, be very sure of this, the hour of trial is coming fast—summon up all your forces to meet it. If I can serve you, trust to me—I shall pray for you."

"I wish you would," said Muriel, with tears in her eyes; "I am sure you will be heard."

Mr. Fairfax smiled, and turned away to speak to Nellie.

"You like Rome, I presume, Miss Heathcote?"

"'Like' is no word to apply to Rome, Mr. Fairfax; it is far too cold and conventional."

"I agree with you. Rome has an inexplicable charm for those who can appreciate it—and I am sure you can," said Mr. Fairfax, with his peculiarly bright smile.

Nellie was flattered, but she would not own it.

"How many do you say that to, Mr. Fairfax?" she asked. "You will be telling me next that I ought to write a book about it—or a little poem, at least."

"Why not?" he replied, coolly. "It would be, I am sure, as good as the rest of them."

"You despise women's books, then?"

"Not at all, when they write about what they understand."

Muriel was listening, and joined in the conversation, as if by an impulse she could not resist.

"If any woman dare write a book founded on her own experiences—I mean a woman who has lived her life, and knows what that life is in its innermost and secret thoughts—if she dare dissect a woman's character as it truly is, what a book it would be! But there is not one of us bold enough to do it."

Mr. Fairfax looked at her—at the suppressed yet passionate expression of love

and suffering upon her face, and sighed as he said,

"It would be like a wreck-chart, to show where the brightest hopes, the purest love, the noblest aspirations had gone to wrack and ruin."

He had hardly said the words before the folding-doors of the *salon* were thrown open, and Trevor stood upon the threshold. Bronzed by climate, in his rough travelling-dress, he looked little like the Caryl of old times.

Miss Jerome and Nellie did not recognise him, but, oh! the faithful eyes that had hungered for so many years for that one sight! Muriel would have known him among ten thousand, and she half rose from her chair. Mr. Fairfax laid his hand gently on hers.

"The hour of trial has come," he said. "Pray for strength to bear it."

She summoned up all her courage, and

looked even calmly at him as he went up to his wife.

"You did not expect me," he said. How the familiar tones thrilled through her!

"No," was the answer; "you are two days before the time."

"I came by an earlier boat." He turned to look around, and saw Miss Jerome.

"Who—who is here? he asked anxiously; and then he caught sight of Muriel. He knew her again that instant; he forgot all but that he was once more in her presence, and he sprang forward.

"Muriel!" he said, "at last!"

Mr. Fairfax rose quietly, and spoke in his low and measured tones.

"You see a dear old friend, Captain Trevor—Miss Gore; but I need not present you, she remembers you!"

Muriel sat pale, and still, and cold, but pride came to her aid.

"I am very glad," she said, and held out her hand. "Now go and speak to Nellie

and Miss Jerome." One firm long clasp met hers, and Caryl turned away.

It was all so bewildering that no one had any presence of mind except Kate, who saw nothing but natural astonishment at meeting an old friend under peculiar circumstances; and Mr. Fairfax, who was perfectly the master of the situation.

Trevor was too thoroughly a man of the world not to regain his composure on the spot. He turned to Miss Jerome, and expressed his pleasure at seeing her again, congratulated Nellie Heathcote on having improved in her appearance, welcomed Mr. Fairfax to Rome, and, in short, made himself generally agreeable.

Muriel gradually recovered herself, and the conversation grew general.

Nellie was thrown off her guard, and the more so that, when they left at night, it was Mr. Fairfax who walked by the side of Muriel; Caryl who escorted Miss Jerome and herself.

They walked home in the lovely Roman moonlight, and parted at the door of their hotel.

"For to-night adieu," were Trevor's farewell words. "I see as yet you know nothing of the beauties of the country round Rome, Miss Heathcote; I must show them to you. We must have some riding parties when once this week of religious dissipation is over; I'll get some capital horses from Jarrett's."

Mr. Fairfax had spoken little to Muriel on the way. He was too gentlemanly to intrude upon her confidence; he only said,

"Miss Gore, should any circumstance arise, during our stay here, which might seem to require friendly and disinterested advice, will you remember that I shall always be glad to serve you, in any way? and this may happen."

"I think it may—that is, if Kate has any idea of going into a convent."

"You have heard of this, then?"

"Only a distant hint. She alluded to it even this evening."

"No decision has been come to as yet. I trust to you to mention it to no one. Rome is specially afflicted with scandal and idle gossip."

Nothing more was said, but, as Fairfax turned his steps homeward, he mused over Muriel's last sentence. She certainly knew of this before Lady Beauvilliers had named it to her. How? Besides himself, only Trevor had any idea of it, and he came to the conclusion that there had been a correspondence.

"It is a difficult position for her," he thought, "terribly difficult, if Lady Beauvilliers leaves her husband. She needs praying for. I am not quite sure, if I had known all this sooner, that I should have pushed matters so far; and yet one soul is worth as much as another, and Miss Gore must yield precedence to Lady Beauvilliers. Besides, it is too late. I will do my best

to guard her, and the rest must be left to fate! Some people might object to the word, I don't; it simply means, to me, the course of events with which Heaven has less to do than the Prince of Evil, and he has been unusually busy in Miss Gore's life. Will he triumph at last? We shall see."

Nellie wrote to Charlie before she slept. She told him of Caryl's arrival, but added that he seemed very pleasant and friendly, and not at all inclined to be sentimental; and Charlie, somewhat consoled by this assurance, and having some important business on hand, deferred his arrival till the middle of January.

As for Caryl, that one glance at Muriel had shown him the truth. She loved him still, and as deeply as ever. If years of absence and silence had failed to change her—if all his cruelty and falsehood had not won her heart from him, he could well afford to play a waiting game now. Let

Kate but take the step she was thinking of, and then would be the time to work on Muriel's love and pity. Meantime, there must be no scandal in Rome—nothing to startle her. She must gradually learn once more to associate him with every plan—to miss him when he was absent, if only for a few hours—to have him a part and parcel of her daily life; and then, when the unseen chains were riveted firmly and strongly about her—then, when she could not break free from them, he would put her love to the test, and she would be all his own once more.

CHAPTER X.

HOW THE NEW YEAR CAME IN.

Drag on, long night of Winter, in whose heart
Nurse of regret, the dead Spring, has no part;
Drag on, O night of dreams—O night of fears,
Fed by the sunshine of the bygone years.

MORRIS.

THE Christmas week had come and gone. Muriel and her friends had been through all the "functions," and Miss Jerome had actually seen the Pope. But here she became utterly confused by sundry recollections of Dr. Cumming's lugubrious books.

"My dear," she said to Muriel, as they drove home after High Mass on Christmas Day, "why do they write about the Scarlet

Woman? You see that the Pope wears white, and I thought he was indicated by that name."

"Not at all," said Nellie. "You mistake the whole thing; it is the Cardinals—don't you see their crimson petticoats and lace tunics?"

"And lovely lace it is, my dear. Did you notice the one of rose point? Well, I am very glad it is not the Pope, for he looks such a dear, kind, clean old gentleman, that I should be really sorry if he was to undergo all that is predicted."

"So should I," said Muriel. "He is a thoroughly good man, and whenever he politically does anything I do not like, I always attribute it to his advisers, not to his own kind heart."

In the afternoon of that day, Caryl called. He seemed depressed, but made no allusion to it, till, several other visitors having come in, and Miss Jerome and Nellie being fully occupied, he found an

opportunity of speaking quietly to Muriel. Strange to say, it was the first time they had spoken apart; and though Muriel had been accustomed to seeing him and hearing his voice, yet, when he spoke to her in the old low soft tones, her heart beat very fast.

"I am so thankful," he said, "that you are here just now, and that we are friends. You remember what I hinted at in one of my letters? Well, I think it is coming to pass. Lady Beauvilliers has quite made up her mind to become a convert or a pervert, whichever you please to call it."

"You have no objection to that, I hope? Believe me she will be the better and happier for it. No form of Protestantism would satisfy her heart."

"Not even Ritualism," said Caryl, smiling the old sweet smile. "I hear you can speak from experience on that point."

Muriel paused before she answered, and then said,

"I once believed so intensely in it, but then they squabble over such trifles—the cut of a coat, or a position in church. Now I know all Roman Catholics don't agree, whatever they may say; but then, though they differ more or less on points of doctrine, they don't break up the unity of the Church. They cannot hire a chapel, and form a new sect—that is such a comfort. They doubt, possibly, but they submit."

"Not the Alt-Catholics. I have seen them, and heard them, in Munich," answered Caryl.

"No. But they declare they are still members of the Catholic Church. Well, what I mean is that Kate is very much in earnest, and, if she were thrown amongst all this petty squabbling, she would be disgusted, and fling up religion altogether."

"And have you done so, Muriel?"

The old name again! She thrilled at the sound.

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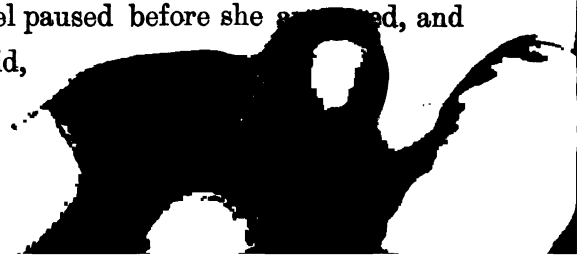

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ism the only road to Heaven—that is the difference. But as for Kate, I am sure that you will not stand in the way of her search for peace."

"No, most certainly not. Even if I had not felt this before, do you think I could have resisted your pleading?"

Muriel looked up, and met the grave eyes gazing down steadily into her own, so steadily that they seemed to penetrate into her very soul, and she turned away, half startled.

"It is not that I object to," he went on, "nor indeed to the further step she proposes; but the breaking of any old tie is painful, though it has ceased to bind the heart. I do not think of Lady Beauvilliers as my wife now. A priest's words united us; but what are they when souls are apart? There is no true union in the sight of Heaven but the union of souls; therefore she is perfectly free, in my idea, to form any new contract she pleases.

In this case she pleases to become the bride of Heaven, or, at any rate, to enter a convent, and to take certain vows (whatever they may be) which will involve total and everlasting separation from myself and the rest of the world. She has my full consent; she believes it necessary for her soul's salvation. God forbid that I should stand in the way!"

"Then you consent to part with Kate for ever?"

"Yes. Is it not far better than the way in which some men have to part with their wives, by a judicial decree? Why can we not agree to sever by our own choice, without the scandal of a court of law?"

"But you must be very, very sorry?"

"No. It is long since we contributed to each other's happiness. What I do regret, is the breaking up of home—not that we have had a settled or a happy one; but wherever our goods and chattels are, wherever there is anyone to be a com-

panion to us, waiting for our arrival, and arranging our daily life, there is a certain sort of home, an anchorage to come back to after stormy voyages. I shall have none now—I shall be a lonely, homeless wanderer."

"Don't speak so sadly, Caryl—I mean Captain Trevor."

"How many years is it since I heard those dear lips speak the very same words? Call me Caryl—then I know I have still a friend."

"When is it to be?" asked Muriel, wholly wrapt up in Caryl's troubles.

"I do not know—before Lent, I should say. Will you come and see her to-morrow, and tell me what she says? I shall be watching to walk home with you."

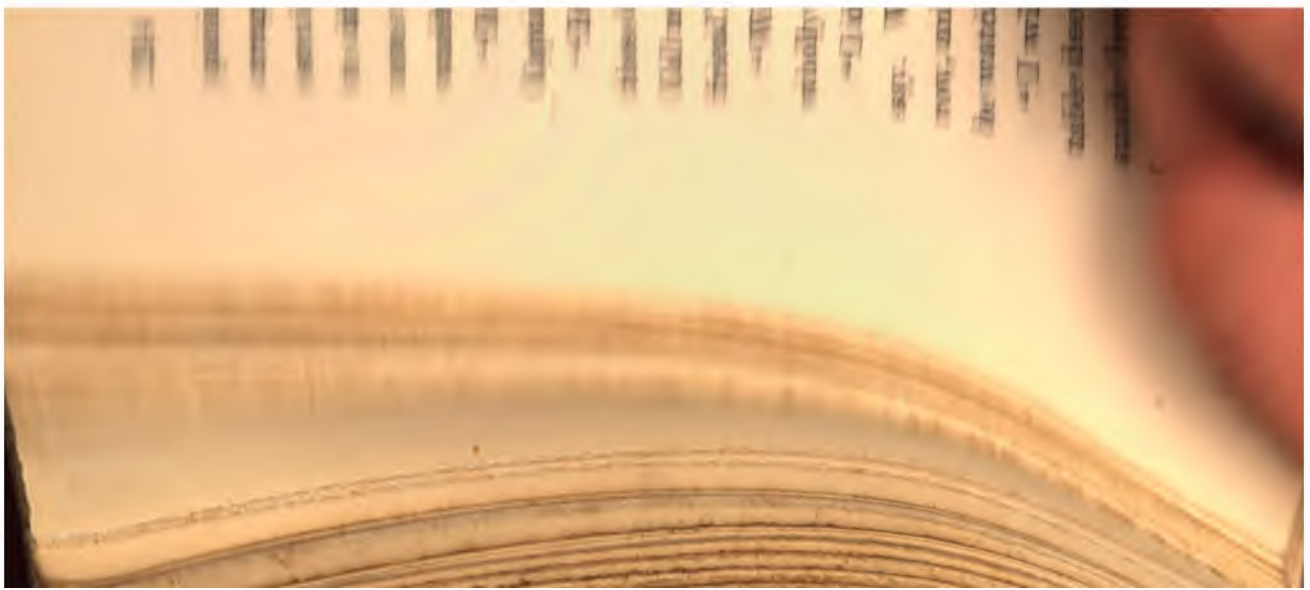
"I will indeed," said Muriel, on charitable deeds intent. "I would try and persuade her to give up this idea, but that I know it would be useless."

"I am sure it would. Perhaps you had

better let that alone. She will trust you more if you entirely sympathise with her. But you will keep my secret, will you not? I shall expect you after lunch to-morrow." And as he rose he contrived to lay his hand on hers with a gentle pressure, but, as he turned away, a strange, triumphant smile was curling his lip, under the heavy moustache.

Next day Muriel fulfilled her promise of seeing Kate. She found Lady Beauvilliers at home, writing very busily. Trevor had warned her of Muriel's probable arrival, and Kate was resolved to speak frankly to her old friend. She had never seemed so charming to Muriel as on that day, when she confessed her share in robbing Muriel of her bridegroom.

"I know I have embittered your life," she said. "I pray to Heaven to forgive me, as you have done. If, when I know that I am forgiven, when I have made the only atonement in my power, by the



you in reality belong to me, and do as I ask you."

"What is that?"

"Just believe what I tell you, and not start at shadows. Calling all sorts of things sins! You don't know what sin is."

"Don't I? I am afraid I do."

"Sin is an effect, not a cause. For example, I am angry, and I knock a man down and hurt him; the act is the sin; it does not follow that the thought is wrong. I might have been righteously offended, and yet it was wrong to hurt the fellow."

"It is too nice a distinction for me."

"Well, take another view of it. If the thought is right, can the act that results from it be wrong? The world might call it a sin, but I do not, and they could not prove it."

"Supposing I wished to give a hundred pounds away in charity, and I stole that sum to do it, the wish would be right, and the act would be wrong."

sacrifice of wealth and rank, and the devotion of my life to His service, He will in His mercy take me from a world whose temptations have been my ruin—then, Muriel, it may be in your power to restore to Caryl the happiness he lost through me, and I charge you to do it. He will turn so naturally to you, all the old love will revive, and you will be happy at last."

Muriel was silent. She knew that the old love *had* revived already, and that she was at last dearest of all the world to Caryl Trevor.

It did not strike her as wrong; it was part of her life to love him. She had not asked herself what was to be the end of this. She felt it a good thing and a holy one to forgive a great wrong, to be patient with the wronger, to sympathise and console in sorrow, to cheer loneliness, and to be a stay to the afflicted. Verily the Evil One had taken the form of an angel, and was betraying her, even

through the noblest parts of her character.

It was the last time that ever Muriel and Kate spoke together confidentially. Muriel made no effort to shake Kate's decision. It was so plain that Lady Beauvilliers was acting under a deep sense of religion that Muriel almost envied her, and not for the world would she have said a word to hold her back. She had learned to respect the faith of all, and to believe with Praed, when he said:

> "I think, though bigots fast and frown,
> And fight for two and seven,
> That there are fifty roads to town,
> And rather more to heaven!"

Something of this sort she expressed to Kate, who shook her head doubtfully.

"There is but one strait and narrow gate, Muriel dear."

"Well, Kate, we'll compromise. One strait and narrow gate to a vast domain, with its grand palace in the distance. Christ is that narrow gate, but there may be many roads through that domain, many

occurrence, till, insensibly, Muriel had become accustomed to the idea of self-sacrifice for Caryl's sake.

Trevor himself was well satisfied; he felt assured that in the end he should triumph, and day by day his passionate love for Muriel grew deeper and stronger; his soul was wrapped up in her, and, if Kate had not been so fully occupied, she must have noticed his alternate depression and excitement; but her mind was bent on other things, and she was unconscious of the real meaning of what was passing around her.

When Muriel drove up to the hotel, after leaving her horse at the city gate, Caryl was not with her. He had taken leave of her there, thinking it better not to go to the door of the hotel in her carriage. Therefore, when Charlie caught sight of her, she was alone. She flushed up when she saw him, and held out her hand in unfeigned pleasure.

"Charlie at last! This is delightful!"

"No great harm here at present," thought Charlie.

"Yes, Muriel," he said, "here I am. You know I promised to look in upon you before you left the Eternal City."

"I hope you have got a room in the same hotel? And that you have got a place at the *table-d'hôte?* We shall have to make interest to get you with us, for you are a new-comer, and we pass up by rotation."

They went in, chatting gaily, and up to the *salon*, where Charlie, when Muriel had left to change her dress, informed Nellie that he was quite in time. "If Muriel was up to any mischief, she would not have been so glad to see him."

The evening passed over pleasantly, and, when they parted for the night, Charlie asked Muriel if she would take a walk on the Pincian Hill with him. He wished his first view of Rome to be from there. She consented willingly, saying that she had

nothing to do till they went to Mrs. Conway's luncheon, and she would show him the Guido in the Church of the Cappucini as well.

"No fear of a rainy day, Charlie," she added. "They are few and far between. Is it not a comfort to be so independent of all the weather anxiety we go through in England?"

So the walk came off the next day. Charlie did a proper amount of rapture over the view, but gradually turned the conversation on people rather than things.

"I saw Lady Beauvilliers yesterday, Muriel," he said. "She looks very ill."

"Yes, does she not?" replied Muriel, simply. "Do you know that she has become very religious, and is going to enter the Roman Church?"

"So I heard from Nellie. But surely religion ought to have a beautifying effect."

"It has not with her; but then she is so

impulsive. She takes everything to heart so thoroughly."

"And what does her husband say?"

The word husband jarred on Muriel, though she was being taught to regard it as an empty sound.

"What should he say?" she asked, coldly—"what reasonable objection could he make? Besides, he knows it is for her happiness, and he is very unselfish about it."

"Very," said Charlie, drily.

"He is, I assure you. Why, if she thought it necessary to enter a convent for her soul's welfare, he would give his consent."

"Fortunate for her, or the Queen's Proctor might interfere."

"Could he get a divorce, then, if she became a nun?"

"Certainly not—but why should he wish it? Have they quarrelled, or does he wish to be free to marry some one else?"

"Neither, most certainly," was the positive answer.

Charlie was rather astonished; Muriel spoke so calmly, and seemed so sure of what she said.

"Then you are the confidante of his ideas on the point?" was his next attack.

"To be sure I am! Have I not quite forgiven him?—are we not very old friends? Why should I not be?"

"Is it safe, Muriel? Don't they say, *Nous revenons toujours à nos premiers amours?*'"

"Yes, but Kate was his '*premier amour*,' so the proverb does not apply."

"Does it not? Well, I suppose, at all events, that Captain Trevor will not be broken-hearted if he does lose his wife?"

"Charlie, you speak very unfeelingly! Of course, she has never made him happy; but still, as he says, it is the breaking up of whatever home he has had—and he will

be so lonely! Oh! Charlie, it is very sad to be lonely!"

"And you pity him, of course?"

"Of course I do, and I would do anything—that is anything in reason—to console him—would not you?"

"I am afraid I should not answer as well."

"I daresay you are right. As Caryl says, it is only a woman who can sympathize with such a position."

"Captain Trevor seems to have grown very sentimental. Do you know, Muriel, what I have heard of him? Don't let me shock or hurt you, dear—but they say he is a bold bad man."

"It is very near the truth," was Muriel's calm reply. "He has led a reckless life, but he will do anything for those he loves, and indeed he is better now."

"Are you undertaking his reformation, Muriel?"

"Not exactly; but I do all I can to lead him right."

"And when his wife leaves him, what then?"

"Well, he will be all alone. Why should that deprive him of my friendship?"

"Of your friendship, no—but what would the world say?"

"That it was very wrong, perhaps; it always puts the worst construction upon everything. But what it says is no matter to me."

Charlie groaned in spirit.

"Oh! Muriel, you cannot look me in the face, and say that Caryl has not tried to persuade you to be his when he is left alone? You know what I mean—I cannot speak the word; but not his wife—for that you cannot be."

Muriel started as if she were shot.

"Charlie, this is a question you have no right to ask; it concerns another, and I shall not answer it. I tell you we

are friends—dear friends, that is all."

"Have you made him any promise? I will ask this, by my long, vain love for you; by the oath I swore years ago, to guard and shield you as a brother, I ask this."

"I will answer it. I have made no promise of any sort; but his friendship I will not give up at the bidding of anyone."

"No one would ask you, if it were possible for you two to be friends—but you cannot. No man could resist the force of a love so true and enduring as yours. He does not look on the life he would tempt you to lead as a sinful one. Muriel, beware, distrust yourself—be on your guard, or in one thoughtless moment you may say words that a few months hence you would give worlds to unsay."

"I cannot be angry with you, Charlie, you have been so faithful to me, but I am old enough to take care of myself. Now let this subject drop; you have discharged

your conscience; let us speak of something else—Nellie, for instance. You are throwing away a dear, true heart there, Charlie."

"To speak the truth, Muriel, I never quite despaired of winning you at last, till the events of the past three months have convinced me how hopeless it is to expect you to give a thought of love to anyone but Caryl. Now I know Nellie's value, I do not intend to pass my life in sentimental regrets, and I mean to ask her if she will take me—second-hand, as she knows very well my love for her must be."

"Oh! Charlie dear, I am so glad. Do it at once then—do it to-day, for there is a certain pleasant Englishman, a Captain Brandon, fluttering round her, and I am so afraid she should like him. At least, let her see what you mean."

"Very well, dear; I daresay your advice is wise. Besides, I am well inclined to follow it. Like you, I know Nellie's value.

"And then, Charlie, do you know your old friend Count della Villareale is here?"

"Of course I do; a friend of his sent me his address, so I called yesterday, while you were out. He said he had seen you two or three times, but always with Trevor, and that he could not come out much. I suspect that he is deeply implicated in some conspiracy or other, for he told me that the secret police were on his track, and that he thought he should have to leave suddenly and secretly. I gave him my address, and said I would assist him in every way I could to do so. The worst that could happen to me would be that I should be ordered to leave Rome, and I should make my bow and go, and come back when the Italians come, as they will do before long."

They went home, and found Nellie singing in the *salon*.

"Don't you think Italy has improved my voice?" she asked Charlie laughingly.

"Very much, I think, but I should be a

better judge if you would sing another song."

"Sing this, Nellie," said Muriel, who was looking over the music. "It is such a favourite of mine," and she looked at Charlie as she spoke.

Nellie sang as she had been requested. She had a sweet and powerful voice, and when she came to the last verse, she threw an infinite pathos of regret into it.

"Do you ever think they were bitter words?
Their memory haunts me yet.
Do you wonder how you could say them all,
And wonder if I forget?
Yet, dear, my heart has forgiven them long,
Though I thought at first 'twould break.
And whenever I think, it is kindly still,
Just for the old love's sake, sweetheart!
Just for the old love's sake!" *

The song ceased, but Muriel, in a low and dreamy tone, took up the refrain—

"Just for the old love's sake, sweetheart!
Just for the old love's sake!"

Charlie knew the current in which her thoughts were running.

* Rea.

"God grant, dear," he thought, "that you may be a Bayard amongst women—if not *sans peur*, at least *sans reproche*."

CHAPTER XII.

THE ANGEL OF EVIL TRIUMPHANT.

Oh! dream how sweet, too sweet, too bitter sweet,
Whose wakening should have been in Paradise,
Where souls brimful of love abide and meet;
Where thirsty, longing eyes
Watch the slow door,
That, opening, letting in, lets out no more!

CHRISTINA ROSSETTI.

MRS. CONWAY had a villa near Rome, just beyond the Porta del Popolo. It stood on a rising ground, and the gardens crept down the side in broad terraces, half hidden by foliage. The house itself stood on the crown of the height, and overlooked the country round. A wide, cool, marble-floored hall gave access to

rooms opening off it on each side, and connected with each other, all round the house. The windows opened to the ground, and a verandah sheltered the rooms from the intense glare of a southern sun.

Early as it was in the year, the air was as mild as a lovely May day in England—light fleecy clouds flitted slowly, at distant intervals, over a deep blue sky, the flowers were already coming into bloom on the banks that faced the south, and the strong and sweet scent of violets penetrated everywhere. No better time or place could have been found for a garden-party, and it was little wonder that all the world and his wife (of English Rome) had assembled there.

It was rather late when Muriel, Kate, and Miss Jerome arrived; Charlie following in one of those little hired carriages which are such an improvement on our London cabs. Muriel never looked better than on that day. She wore a

pale grey silk, with small crimson flowers upon it; and though her feet were small enough for the curtailed costumes of to-day, yet she had a long sweeping train, of all things the one most becoming to her tall, slight figure; a loose cloak, or burnoose, of black lace, with white silk flowers embroidered lightly upon it, a grey hat, trimmed with crimson velvet, and a grey plume completed her dress.

As she came up the terraces to the villa, many an admiring eye was turned upon her. Nellie was proud of her pet friend, and yet half wished she did not look so well: and she regretted it more than ever when she saw Caryl Trevor come forward to meet her, with a bouquet of crimson camellias and lilies-of-the-valley in his hand.

He looked at Muriel for one instant, and gave a long deep breath. It was not the girl he had been betrothed to at Ropsley-on-the-Sea, but the splendid woman, loving and beloved, who might have the homage of

many a true heart laid at her feet; and he was about to ask her to give up all for his passionate, guilty love! He came towards her, and, bowing low, said, with his peculiarly sweet smile,

"*Hommage à la reine!* You look a queen to-day. May I offer a tribute in the name of another? Kate sends you these." And he placed the bouquet in Muriel's hand.

She blushed deeply as she took it, and their hands met; and thanking him with a sad look, she went on, to greet her hostess.

"So glad to see you, dear Miss Gore," said that hospitable lady. "I do hope you'll enjoy yourself. We are all here now, I think. Captain Trevor, will you take two or three ladies into luncheon? The gentlemen are so scattered, I cannot get them together."

Trevor laughed, and complied with this general request by offering his arm, or rather arms, to Miss Jerome and Nellie; but Charlie made his appearance at that

moment, and having been duly presented to Mrs. Conway, went "upon duty," and advanced to Nellie. That young lady, having her decided preferences, took his arm, and Caryl turned to Muriel.

"Rejected, you see," he said. "Please console me."

"Do, my dear," said good blundering Miss Jerome. "It is such a pity—he has two arms; and really gentlemen are so scarce."

Could Muriel resist such an appeal? She smiled, and they all went in together. The luncheon went off as luncheons generally do, one incident excepted. Mrs. Conway was not strong in Italian, and had an impression that by sticking an O on to any French word, you made it pure Tuscan. This plan she pursued with the Italian *chef de cuisine* of one of the first *trattorie* in Rome, who came to take her orders for the luncheon. Various things were enumerated and arranged, and at last,

all else being settled, Mrs. Conway said emphatically in her polyglot language,

"Mais n'oubliez pas, après tout, il faut avoir un grand gateau, uno gatto molto grande, pour manger, con il vino."

"Un gatto, signora," said the astounded cook; "non é possibile."

"E possibile, faut avoir, un grand gatto."

The cook shrugged his shoulders, bowed, and retired. He thought, "These English are very odd people. They have whims, but they pay—oh! yes, they pay, and they must be obeyed."

So, on that memorable day, good Mrs. Conway pressed fish, fowl, and fruit on her guests, and before the first party left the table, insisted on their taking a piece of cake and a glass of sparkling Monte Pulciano wine.

"Où donc est le gateau, Antonio," she cried. "Apportez ici tout de suite."

Antonio exited, and returned with a very large pie.

"That's not a cake," said Mrs. Conway, relapsing into the vernacular, and waving it away.

"Pardon, signora," was the reply of the *chef*, of course in his native tongue, "a thousand pardons, but this is *il gatto*, and much trouble we have had to get him. At last I persuade old Nenna, at the lodge of the Cesarini Palace, to let me have this—a fine fat one, I assure you, signora; and four scudi had I to pay, and now *eccolo!*"

It was too true. Nenna's cat had been served up most daintily, and all because Mrs. Conway thought that *gateau* in French should be *gatto* in Italian.

Amidst the laughter that ensued, Caryl bent towards Muriel.

"I have something to say to you," he said. "Do you care about the dancing, which is just going to begin? Will you walk out on the terraces with me?"

Muriel silently assented, and they went out. It was daylight still, but the sun had

set behind Monte Mario in golden glory. All was quiet, except the gay sounds of music, softened by distance.

"How lovely it is!" said Muriel. "What can England give us compared with this?"

"Cold hearts and cloudy skies," was the reply. "Cloudy as the fate before me! Well, perhaps I have no right to complain. Happiness was within my reach—I flung it away;' but life, a life of lonely sorrow, seems a hard penalty to pay, does it not, Muriel?"

"Why are you so sad to-night?"

"Kate told me this morning that, as she had my full permission to act as she pleased, she should, in three days, leave me for a convent near Florence."

"So soon? Is there no hope, no delay?"

"None; and, as it must come sooner or later, perhaps it is as well over at once."

"I am very, very sorry!"

"Those are words easily said! Will you prove it? You will not desert me in

my hour of sorrow?—you cannot do it!"

"Oh! no, no, I cannot; it is all so sad!"

"You cannot desert me; you must stay with me. This is no time to mince words. Muriel, you are mine, mine for ever, and you shall not leave me."

He flung his arms around her, and held her in a tight, passionate grasp.

"Caryl, release me," she said, breathlessly.

"No, darling, not till you promise me to come away with me, where, at least, we shall be all in all to each other. Say you will, darling, say you will!"

"Do not ask me—in mercy do not ask me! Let me go!" And she withdrew out of his encircling arms.

"What is it you fear?" he asked, more quietly, as he led her still further down a dimly-lighted terrace walk. "Are you such a baby as to start at the idea of some endless torture, to pay for a few short years of happiness?"

"No, Caryl, no. God knows us better than we know ourselves—our strong affections, our weak nature. I cannot believe that I should be eternally condemned for loving you. It is not that. I must have committed so many sins quite as bad in His sight, and yet I believe in His forgiveness; but I cannot do it—for His sake do not ask me!"

"Then it is the verdict of society you fear?"

"Society! What is society to me? All is a blank where you are not. If I never spoke again to a soul on earth but you, do you think I should care? Caryl, you are all the world to me, and you know it!"

Again he strained her to his heart, again she struggled away.

"You shall not refuse me!" he said. "I have settled all. We leave Rome on the morning of the day after to-morrow; no *visés* on our passports, that would betray all. We will ride to the frontier by

Nerola, long before we are traced, and who will care to trace us? We shall be far away, and then for a new life in a new land, never to be parted more!"

Muriel's tears were flowing fast.

"Do not tempt me, my own Caryl. I dare not do this!"

"You dare, and you will! I shall be free in the sight of Heaven, and why should you go down to the grave lonely and sad, because you fancy that vows spoken by human lips make a tie no love can break?"

"I should be lonely—I shall, but it must be so."

"Remember this, dear—if we part to-night it is for ever! The world you cling to will never sanction our friendship. It must be all or nothing."

A cold chill came over that poor tempted heart.

"For ever!" she said, tremblingly; and yet she knew that what Caryl said was

true—"for ever! Oh, no! oh, no!—I could not bear that!"

"Cannot you trust my love, my precious one?" came the soft pleading words. "Is not your happiness dearer to me than my own? Trust to me, dear love—oh! do not say no! I shall tell you to-morrow how I have arranged all. Don't send me away to live a life you dare not look upon—save me from myself, and from despair and ruin!"

Muriel was silent; she could not bear to lose him now, when he would be, in a certain sense, free by his wife's desertion.

"Let me have to-morrow to think it over," she said, at last; "oh! do not press me for an answer to-night. I will not go to Ostia; when you return you shall have my decision."

"No!—I cannot bear that awful suspense. Tell me now, at once—this very moment, that there is hope." And, as he

spoke, he drew her head towards him, and laid it on his breast.

Her fingers played idly with the flowers in his coat, but she did not shrink now from the close embrace.

"You cannot speak the words that will sever us?" he whispered—"you cannot say you will not come with me—my wife in the sight of Heaven. No, my own, own Muriel, you dare not!—you shall not say it!"

"God help me, I cannot!" she murmured; and he stooped and pressed one long passionate kiss on the lips no one but himself had ever touched, through all those long, long weary years!

At that instant voices were heard, and they started apart, Caryl just saying, as they did so, "Mine now, darling!—mine for ever!" when Nellie and Charlie came up the path, so occupied in their own happiness that they did not notice the two, half-hidden by the trees. It gave them

time to recover themselves, and they walked towards the house.

Few words were said. Caryl merely repeated the arrangement, that he would come down to her hotel on his return from Ostia, and say at what hour the next morning he would send a carriage to the door, to take her to the Porta Pia, where he and the horses would meet her.

They re-entered the lighted *salon*. Dancing was going on, and Caryl, placing his arm round her waist, whirled her off into the mazes of the valse. It was the "Mabel," always a favourite with foreign bands, and the sweet melody rose and fell with a pathetic sound that penetrated every fibre of Muriel's frame. But, clasped close to Caryl, his heart beating against hers, she forgot everything but that at last she was his own, and an intoxicating, maddening sense of joy took possession of her as she looked up into Caryl's eyes and caught the love-light beaming from them.

It was to be an early party—there were other evening engagements in Rome, and, during the rest of the time it lasted, those two were never apart. At last it was so obvious that they were entirely wrapt up in each other, that various remarks began to pass about.

"My dear Miss Jerome," said one lady, "how very devoted Captain Trevor is to Miss Gore! What would Lady Beauvilliers say if she were here?"

Poor Miss Jerome faltered out an excuse.

"They are very old friends—they are from the same county."

Caryl, who had left Muriel's side for a moment, to fetch her an ice, caught the sentence.

"At last!" he thought. "So much the better—now it is too late to startle her; and it is well that she should find one foot over the threshold of 'polite society,' on the outward path—she will know then that it is useless not to put the other over too."

He was right. Many a woman has been lost because she fancied herself so compromised that there was no retreat; and this only because some incautious, yet innocent conduct has been so severely commented on by her candid friends, that it has come to wear the aspect of guilt. No hand has been stretched out to save her, no hospitable door open to her, where she might meet her equals as an equal. She finds herself excluded from the houses where she visited, no reason assigned, nothing that she could refute or deny.

And this moral murder is committed every day around us—for moral murder it is—the ruin of a woman's fair fame; and what remains? Only the course sure then to be suggested to her by him who, in selfish admiration, or idle amusement, has wrought this mischief. A home is broken up, and a soul plunged so deep in the pit of sin that only God's special mercy can save it from final destruction. And there are cases as

bad as this when no such temptation has been the cause of the scandal.

For some frivolous reason, or for none at all, perhaps, only a simple dislike, acquaintances once sought, and hospitably welcomed, are suddenly "cut," as the world phrases it. If it is a man, it matters very little, so that he is not blackballed at his club—politics, business, a thousand things, may have caused the cessation of intercourse. But with a woman it is otherwise; she finds herself suddenly excluded from some house where she was received. She is conscious of no reason; she asks for one—it is refused. "We have a right to visit with whom we will," is the reply; or perhaps, somebody said, "That lady is not a nice person." "Why not?" is inquired—"on what grounds is this alleged?" But no further explanation is given. Time passes on. Friends who used to meet her there inquire where she is? "Why, she is never

seen." A shrug of the shoulders, an indefinite reply, is the only answer. "There must be some reason for this," they say to each other. "We will wait and see before we ask her again."

And so the circle goes on widening and widening, till the victim has but one resource—to compel an explanation, if she has the spirit to do it; or denounce the first offenders, as sinners against every law of the Gospel, and every etiquette of society. But if she is of a revengeful disposition, be sure that in the course of years the day of reckoning will come; the lower she sinks in the scale of social position, the bitterer will that revenge be; and if she forgives, there is One whose vengeance does not sleep, and whose arm is not shortened. The originators of the evil may accumulate wealth, they may attain to high distinction, they may marry and be given in marriage, sons and daughters may be born to them, but the sword of Fate hangs sus-

pended over their heads even to the third and fourth generation. As they have done to others, so shall it be done to them. There is a canker at the heart of their wealth, a rotten prop to their lofty position, and a curse on their babes in the cradle!

I speak strongly, perhaps, but I feel so. I have seen such mischief result from this sort of uncharitable conduct, that I would place it in its true light, as it affects the women of our day. It is generally the fools of the world who act thus; but then they are such a numerous race, and one never knows how to deal with them; one can only sigh, and wish they were a shade worse, and so eligible for an idiot asylum.

But this is a sad digression. Let us go back to Rome and Caryl.

Muriel saw the wondering looks around, but she cared nothing for them. Now it seemed to her that she had passed the Rubicon, and she only longed to be away

from them all, and alone with Caryl. He spoke but little of the future, but he let her see how entire and passionate was his devotion to her; and when the party was breaking up, said,

"I shall not go to the soirée at Lady Brandon's to-night—I have other things to do—will you?"

"No, dear," she answered. "I, too, shall have some arrangements to make."

"I shall be with you as soon as possible to-morrow evening, darling, after our return from Ostia. I shall bring you a letter from Kate. I am very glad that you do not intend to go. My pet, till you are all my own, it is only painful to meet you under the eyes of others; but I must go—it will divert all suspicion. Here comes Nellie. Miss Heathcote, I am regretting that the party is over, and I find Muriel is not going to Ostia."

Nellie had come up feeling very angry, for the whispers going round the room

had reached her; but this circumstance of Muriel's not going to Ostia again diverted her suspicions.

"Not going!" she said—"why not?"

"No reason," said Muriel, "but that I don't care about so long a drive. Charlie will escort you and Miss Jerome."

The carriage was announced, and they took leave of their hostess. Trevor went home with them. As it was his own carriage, there was nothing to be said, especially as he declared they could make room for Charlie.

At the door of their hotel he took leave of them, and no one detected the close pressure he gave to Muriel's hand, nor the murmured "darling" which closed his farewell. He dismissed the carriage, and, muffling his face in his cloak, went straight to the livery stables.

Here he found the man in charge, an Italian, and a bribe of a few scudi secured his silence to the world at large as to Trevor's

having hired the two strongest horses, one with a side-saddle, to be at the Porta Pia at five A.M. on the next day but one.

"Say nothing, Benedetto, and five scudi more shall be yours when we are fairly off for our gallop over the Campagna. We want no intruders on our ride, and if there is no news of the horses for three or four days, be not alarmed; we shall be exploring Subiaco, or the country toward Passo Correse. I will leave this cheque for their value; if they come back, destroy it; if not, give it to the master. You are honest, I know."

Benedetto looked his wiliest; he was a thorough Italian at heart, and would have aided the escape of every suspected conspirator in Rome, if he could have done so, himself unnoticed. In this case it was the rich "English milord," and he was delighted to be entrusted with what he made sure was a political secret.

Caryl then went homewards, well sa-

tisfied with his day's work, and found Kate and Mr. Fairfax in the *salon*.

"I have been advising Lady Beauvilliers to go to Ostia to-morrow," said Mr. Fairfax. "It will prevent much idle talk."

"I quite agree," answered Caryl; "and I was thinking of a shooting expedition, which would take me very early out of Rome on the morning after to-morrow; there will then be nothing extraordinary in Lady Beauvilliers going to Florence, to see some friends."

"Thank you, Caryl," she said gently. "You are very considerate."

"May God reward you for your generous co-operation in Lady Beauvilliers' pious desires!" said Mr. Fairfax. "From whatever cause it springs, I believe that He will bless you for it."

Caryl smiled, but said nothing, and went to his room, where he had much to arrange, as might be easily imagined.

Meantime Muriel and her party were drinking tea, as if they had been in Eng-

land. Miss Jerome held to tea-drinking as firmly as she did to the Protestant Faith, and had discovered the English grocer, who supplied her with the means of private indulgence in this luxury, as she maintained that the stuff served up in the hotel was not tea at all, but dried leaves—olive leaves, perhaps.

So she had her own tea-pot and made her own tea, and Muriel paid for the hotel tea, and drank the old lady's, so that all parties were satisfied.

"I have something to tell you," said Charlie.

"Now don't do it here," pleaded Nellie.

"I shall, dear; we are all old friends. Nellie, having resolved to marry, has selected me."

"How can you say so, you naughty boy?" she cried, indignantly.

"How can you say it is *not* so?" persisted Charlie. "I told you you had better

marry, and you had better take me, and you took my advice."

"So wise of you, my dear," said Miss Jerome; "and he really is a very good young man."

"Oh, don't!" laughed Muriel. "That phrase always reminds me of tea-parties and prayer-meetings, and the style of youth one meets there. Nellie deserves something far better, and God knows she has got it. Charlie, you too deserve the best wife in all the world, and I do believe you have found her."

"And you won't miss Nellie, dear," said Charlie. "You will be always with us—that is, whenever you like."

A sudden pallor came over Muriel's face.

"Don't let us speak of the future, Charlie," she said hoarsely. "We none of us know what it may bring to any of us." And she rose and left the room.

"Poor soul!" said Miss Jerome. "She is thinking of her own young days. You

see, dears, this reminds her of them so vividly."

"How stupid of me!" said Charlie, who had been alarmed at the change. "Of course it does. We will leave her to herself awhile, and she will recover. I am very glad she is not going to Ostia; it shows me that, whatever attraction Caryl and his trials have for her, there is no real harm in the matter."

Verily Keble was right when he said,

"Not e'en the tenderest heart, and next our own,
Knows half the reasons why we smile or sigh."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE END OF ALL.

The hope I dreamed of was a dream—
  Was but a dream; and now I wake,
Exceeding comfortless and worn and old,
  For a dream's sake.

. . . . . .

Lie still, my breaking heart,
  My silent heart, lie still and break.
Life and the world and mine own self are changed
  For a dream's sake.

CHRISTINA ROSSETTI.

HOW did Muriel pass that night? Strange to say, she slept. Intense excitement had worn her out so thoroughly that even the power of thought was dulled.

She had all the next day for preparation —a few bills to pay, a few letters to write,

that was all. There would be no leave-taking when she stole out in the grey of the morning to go to Caryl. She needed but a very few things. She could get them all into a travelling-bag, and her money and some business papers she could take in a little courier-bag strapped over her shoulder.

She just thought all this out. No dream of going back crossed her mind. It was as good as done; it was too late now, even if she wished it—and she did not. She could not desert him now; it would be his utter ruin.

At last she was ready to lie down, and then, with the old habit of youth, knelt down to pray. A wild chaos of thought swept over her. Could she ask to be kept from temptation, she who was so deliberately running into it? Could she pray that His kingdom might come, when she was casting herself out from it? She did not want to be helped to tread this temptation under foot, and she was too true even then

to mock God by making requests which she had no wish should be complied with.

"I have made my choice," she thought. "I sacrifice all to Caryl. God knows my heart. He will do as is right. I leave it all to Him."

She rose, and, taking a flower which Caryl had given her, laid it on her pillow, just where her head would lie, then stooped and kissed it.

"Caryl! my Caryl," she murmured, "I cannot be unhappy while you love me!"

She intended to lie awake and think of him, and all the joy of the life that was before them, but fatigue overpowered her, and she slept, and the rest of the party were off to Ostia before she awoke. Nellie had peeped in, and, seeing her so soundly sleeping, would not wake her, and tripped off in happy anticipation to meet Charlie. Charlie looked graver than his present position warranted. So much so that Nellie asked him if he had heard any bad news.

"Yes and no, dear," was his answer; "do not ask me to-day, I will tell you to-morrow;" and he made an effort to fling off his gloom, in which he more than partially suceeeded,

Now the truth was that, when Charlie left Muriel's *salon* on the preceding evening, he went downstairs to smoke a cigar in the courtyard, and the loveliness of the night tempted him to walk out into the Piazza itself. A man who was coming hastily towards the hotel looked intently at him and stopped.

"Signor Evans, I think?" he said.

"You are right," answered Charlie.

"Signor di Morcini begs of you to have the kindness to follow me; he awaits us in that street."

"Di Morcini! Is there anything the matter? Is he in danger?"

"*Signor, si,*" and, without another word, his guide led the way to where Villareale

was standing, half hidden in the dark shadow of an arched entrance.

"Welcome, *amico mio*," said the Count. "I know I may confide in you. I must leave Rome in twenty-four hours, or I shall make more intimate acquaintance with the dungeons of St. Angelo than I care to do. I am suspected, but as yet they have not traced me."

"How can I help you?—only tell me."

"Thus: go with me to the English stables, hire a horse to ride out early to-morrow morning; at break of day, have him sent to the Porta Pia, and I shall find him there. Once mounted, I know my way to the frontier: I shall cross it long before nightfall. When I do not return, take the value of the horse and pay it to the owner. You can say then whom it came from; or, if you fear to be discovered aiding me, say that, as you hired the horse to lend to me, you feel responsible for the loss. I will give you the money before we part."

"No, no," said Charlie, "you may want it in your flight; you can send it to England. We will go at once to the stables, it is getting late."

Thus it happened that they arrived there only an hour after Caryl's visit. Benedetto, the groom, had been expending some portion of Trevor's scudi in sundry potations of *vino padronale*, which rendered him more talkative than he usually was. He knew Villareale as many Romans did, but would have died rather than betray him and the hope of Italy, and was therefore well inclined to save him. When Charlie inquired about the horse, he looked very wise and said,

"It is already done; the horses are hired to be at the Porta Pia at daybreak, on the morning after to-morrow. Your friend the English Captain has arranged it all."

"Impossible!" whispered the Count to Charlie; "he knows nothing."

marry, and you had better take me, and you took my advice."

"So wise of you, my dear," said Miss Jerome; "and he really is a very good young man."

"Oh, don't!" laughed Muriel. "That phrase always reminds me of tea-parties and prayer-meetings, and the style of youth one meets there. Nellie deserves something far better, and God knows she has got it. Charlie, you too deserve the best wife in all the world, and I do believe you have found her."

"And you won't miss Nellie, dear," said Charlie. "You will be always with us—that is, whenever you like."

A sudden pallor came over Muriel's face. "Don't let us speak of the future, Charlie," she said hoarsely. "We none of us know what it may bring to any of us."

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g days. You

Charlie was silent. A cold fear froze him in every vein. Could this be the end of all? Yet he had no clue. It was all wild confusion. The Count turned to Benedetto.

"I know nothing of all this," he said. "Let Signor Evans have the horse he requests, at the Porta Pia at daybreak—not to-morrow, but the day after; the same day as the English Captain has ordered his. It will divert suspicion," he added, in a lower tone, to Charlie. "If we go out together, it will give you an excuse to come to the Porta Pia, and me one to ride near them. If it is as you suspect, be sure I will do my best to bring her back to Rome. You must ride out in the afternoon, to some place I shall appoint, and meet her there. There will be ample time for me to escape. They will hunt Rome for me first, and, well mounted, I can defy the gendarmes, even if they do track me."

"A thousand thanks," said poor Charlie,

whose mind was filled with horrible forebodings. "I will do as you advise. It is this paying for the horses that alarms me. It looks so like escaping in secret from Rome."

"Very like it, I must confess," said the Count.

Charlie went to the hotel in a state of anxiety and low spirits which he could not overcome. Luckily Miss Jerome and Nellie had retired for the night, so that it was not till the next morning, when his composure had been somewhat restored by a night's restless rest, that he met them, and thi swas the reason of his depression, when they started for Ostia.

The Trevors' carriage drove up to the rendezvous just as Nellie, Miss Jerome, and Charlie reached it. Kate had made all final preparations on the preceding day; the suspense and the doubt were over, and she was calm, and even happy, and she looked so. Trevor seemed unusually cheer-

ful and attentive to her, and there was nothing to excite suspicion; yet Charlie was not satisfied.

"I will ask Lady Beauvilliers downright," he thought, "if she is going for an early ride with Trevor. God grant that I am mistaken—that I have misjudged Muriel!"

And where was that tempted soul? What was she doing all this long day? She breakfasted alone in her room, read *Galignani*, and tried not to think. A knock came at the chamber door.

"*Chi è?*" answered Muriel.

It was opened, and the chambermaid (for they have one, *pro bono Inglese*) made her entrance.

"A letter for the Signorina."

Muriel thanked her, and took it. As she suspected, it came from Caryl—just a few loving lines, to say that he had already made all preparation, and would be with her that evening for a few moments.

She sat and looked at it, and, as she kissed the paper his hand had touched, an electric thrill of joy ran through her heart, and she murmured, "My own, my own!"

"Love was still the Lord of all."

She had a few things to replace in her boxes; the dress she had worn yesterday. How fondly she looked at it! Caryl had praised it! An hour was enough to pack up all except the very few things which she selected to take with her, and her papers, which she placed in the courier-bag, with her gold and notes. She chose a travelling-dress of dark linsey, which would make a riding-skirt by unlooping it, and a waterproof jacket that matched it.

At last all was ready, the boxes shut and locked; and then she looked over the photographs, and the other purchases, of bronzes and curiosities, which she had made in Rome, and placed them one by one in a wooden chest she had bought in which to send them to England. At last she came

to a leather case, and, idly wondering what it contained, she opened it. It was a crucifix of ebony, with a silver Christ; she laid it down suddenly, and turned from it, closing her eyes to shut it out. How well she remembered the day she had bought it! They had been to a service at the church of St. Sylvester, the music had been very fine and very touching, and she had felt an infinite sense of weakness, and yet trust, in an unseen Friend. She looked at the crucifix again—it was no special work of art, but, as she looked, the whole Divine pathetic story came back upon her, and she seemed to hear that last pleading cry, "Forgive them—they know not what they do!"

Yes, they did not know—*she did.* He had loved her, He did love her still, and she was flinging it all away for Caryl. Henceforth she must live an alien to Him—never more to ask His help, never more to seek His consolation, never more to feel all

the blessing of such a love amidst the storms of life.

And, even as she looked, it seemed to her that she thought of Him, not as the Christ of history, not as the King of Saints, enthroned on high in the far Heaven, but as of the Friend, the Brother, living and dwelling still *with her*, though unseen. She had unconsciously so loved and trusted Him, she never realized how much till now; and yet by her own deed He was about to leave her for ever.

Clearer, and clearer still, came the sense of what a dreary blank life would be without that love—not even Caryl's could replace it. It was no mere abstraction of faith she was parting with, but a personal Friend, dearer than all the world beside. There was no fear of punishment in this world or the next; hers was a fearless nature, but it was a loving one, and love saved her.

"No! no!" was her cry of anguish, "I cannot live an alien and an outcast from

that love—not even for your sake, Caryl, my own!" And amidst a burst of passionate tears, she flung herself on her knees and kissed the little crucifix. It was all so real to her—love made it so. She seemed to see Him standing by, with pale, sad face and thorn-crowned head, holding out pleading hands.

"Don't weep over me, Lord, as once over Jerusalem," she murmured amidst her sobs. "I will listen, I will not go away. Oh! love me still, and forgive me."

Then swept over her heart the memory of Caryl, and she could have groaned in her deep anguish. Hours passed on, and the fierce fight continued. Divine love and human passion struggled for the mastery, but the victory was won at last.

"It is over," she said softly to herself. "Thine, Thine for ever; and I leave my darling to Thy loving care. By the sacrifice I make, by the triumph Thy love has

won, have mercy upon him in his hour of bitter need!"

That prayer was heard, that sacrifice accepted, for the hour of need had indeed come to Caryl Trevor.

She had been pacing the room in the agony of mind which makes rapid motion the only safety-valve; but the wild tempest was hushing now, and she sat down to write a few lines to Caryl. She never hesitated once. The words were few and simple—

"Forgive me, my own darling; do not curse me—I cannot go with you. I have been dreaming, but the awakening has come at last. There is One I love still better, One I cannot leave even for you. I cannot put away the Saviour's love, not even for you, my Caryl. I shall never care for anyone else. I have loved you all my life, and by that love, by this hour of exquisite pain, by the hard sacrifice I

have made, I know that we shall meet again where there will be no sin, no sorrow, no parting, and I shall be yours at last.

"MURIEL."

It was done; she summoned an attendant, and ordered the note to be taken to Captain Trevor's hotel, and sent their three passports to be viséd. She intended to go to Naples; she would not see him again; it would only be fresh agony. Life would be very, very dreary, but lonely—no, never more! One love would still be hers—a love that could never change or forsake, and it might not be for many years; she might "go home" soon.

"Be the day ever so weary or long,
At length it ringeth to even-song."

She was calmer now; she would tell Charlie, she thought, just enough to let him see that it was better they should all go to Naples, and he would arrange everything for them; and then she lay down on the

sofa and slept, a quiet, dreamless sleep, worn out with weeping, and the fierce trial she had gone through—slept as the victor sleeps on the won battle-field.

And how went on the Ostia expedition? Very merrily indeed, for the day was fine, the excavations most interesting, the pine-woods of Fusano the most charming lounge that was ever known, and the party all in the best of spirits.

Charlie devoted himself to Nellie, and found that he could be completely happy without Muriel; and Miss Jerome was delighted with Kate, who seemed to take an unusual pleasure in her old friend's society.

Caryl made himself universally agreeable; he had never looked handsomer, though his style of beauty now was rather more of the Cœur de Lion than the Ivanhoe type. He seemed to have shaken off the weight of years, and to have gone back to his once gay boyish temper. Kate

smilingly watched him; she had not for years liked him so well as on that day; and once, when he came near her, she called him to her, and said, in a low tone,

"Caryl, I believe that God will bless the step I have taken, for I see how happy it makes you."

A shade came over his face. What could he answer to these unselfish words? He bent down and said,

"Thanks, Kate; believe me, it will always be a great pleasure to me to hear that you are happy."

"I am sure that I shall be; the world has failed to make me so."

He smiled, but he could not enter into the feeling—the world was all to him.

Later in the day, as some of the party were wandering in the pine-woods, Kate called to Charlie and said,

"I want to speak to you, Charlie—can you spare me five minutes? Jerrie, dear, will you take charge of Nellie? Re-

"Alas! for the dust so darkly piled,
O'er each bright but buried gem;
But safe are the treasures death hath sealed,
For there comes no change on them!"

And to Muriel no change could ever come again. She would live henceforth in a world of shadows, till death unlocked the portal, and she met her Caryl again, beyond this world of change.

Day after day passed on, and Caryl lay there. Only Muriel's faithful ear could decipher his low mutterings—her own name came so often; but at last, when, wearied with a long night's watching, she had fallen into a deep sleep, came a gleam of consciousness, and he recognised Charlie, who was sitting by his side. Then Charlie remembered what Fairfax had said, and summoned him, and he and Caryl were left alone.

Few words passed in that short interview; but when Mr. Fairfax saw Muriel two hours afterwards, he simply said to her,

"He knows all now, and he is so thankful; we have hope that this interval of consciousness may return, and then you must be with him."

And it came at last; only next day he unclosed his heavy eyes, and saw and knew her sitting beside him.

"My own darling," he murmured faintly, "don't grieve so,"—for her tears were pouring down like rain—"it is so much better. I did not deserve happiness, and yet it has been given me."

These intervals came back every few hours, and either Fairfax or Muriel was with him. It was happiness, blended with agony to her, that she might love him now—might think of him as her own—and there was no remorse to spoil the pure, unselfish love that threw its halo round this death-bed. And so he passed away. His last words were, "Muriel, my own for ever!" His last look was fixed on her; and when all was over, she bent down and

placed her arms round him, as she had never done in life, and sobbed out her agony on his dead lips.

He was buried under that sunny wall in the English burial-ground; violets bloomed round his grave in early Spring, and in Summer white roses flung down their pure leaves, like tears over the green turf that covered it, and all were planted by Muriel's hand. But long before this she had gone back for a time to England, not to live there—her home was Rome now, and her shrine the English graveyard. She had no fear for him; he was cradled in the arms of a love far deeper than hers.

However much he had wronged her, whatever his sin might have been, could she have cast him out unforgiven, when he came and asked for forgiveness—or even if, in mistaken pride, he had not done so? No; she knew that no wrong, no sin, could have estranged her from him; and if weak, failing human love could so forbear, and

so cling through good and evil, till the blessed end was attained, could love Divine do less? A few short years, then she would go to him who could not return to her, and she was happy.

True, they were parted; but there was no bitterness in this parting, only hopefulness, no doubt as to how they should meet; he was beyond the power of change—he was her own for ever—a little patience, a little waiting, and Caryl and Muriel would meet, to part never more.

I have told my tale. What is your verdict? Was not my darling more sinned against than sinning?

Three years have passed since then, and you may ask, where is she?—waiting here, or gone to Caryl? Think what you please; her life, in as far as it could interest anyone, ended here. Be sure of this, that her sorrow was nobly borne—that it made her even more gentle and loving, and that she

was a blessing to many an aching heart. Living or dead, she is happy, as all unselfish, loving, active souls must be. As for the rest who played their parts in her story, a very few words will tell you how they fared.

Mrs. Evans is gone to her account; let us hope that she met more mercy than she dealt out to others, or it would be "better for her that she had never been born."

Herbert goes on in the same obstinate, egotistical way. The joys and sorrows of others are nothing to him—he will probably die a crabbed, lonely old bachelor, unloved in life, unlamented in death.

Charlie and Nellie are married. Needless to say that they are happy. Two such loyal, affectionate, trustful hearts could not be otherwise; and if they had needed any source of self-congratulation, as to the position they occupied in society, they might have found it in the fact that Mr. and Mrs. Alberic Parsons actually called

upon them. That gentleman had prospered in the world, and bought a huge house; but as his friends sagely remarked, "If he could have hired some brains, it would have been more to the purpose."

Mr. Fairfax is a dignitary of the Roman Church now, and, in these days of strange things, it is possible that before he dies he may wear the pure white robes and the triple crown; but his honest, kindly heart will beat as true still to every instinct of charity and gentle judgment, and earnest interest in the welfare of all around him, as when Kate knelt a penitent before him, as when he soothed Caryl's death-bed with fervent prayers that the soul he thought unreconciled to God, because unreconciled to His Church, might yet find mercy, as when Muriel trusted him, and found him worthy of it.

Miss Jerome yet lives, and finds consolation for the sad death of her darling in the love and esteem of all her old friends;

and she has learned the truth of what Muriel always asserted, that there are some natures which are happier in the memory of the past than in replacing old loves with new.

There are some women who need neither husband nor society to make them happy—who can find all they need in living for others, and for whom one great absorbing love in their life is enough. There are many such—they have loved as Muriel did, not always "wisely," but always "too well." No pale ghost of that intense love could ever satisfy them, and they take their places even proudly in the ranks of the unwedded.

My story is ended now—it is a sad, but a true one, and yet, as I look back on Muriel's life and love, I see how all she felt and suffered was needed to perfect her, and how the one love of her life was made pure and eternal by the events which tried it as by fire; and, above all, how love, in

its highest and most Divine development, is a woman's only true safeguard in the hour of temptation, for it was love in its noblest, grandest phase that saved Muriel, and in that love Muriel is happy, with a happiness that can never pass away.

THE END.

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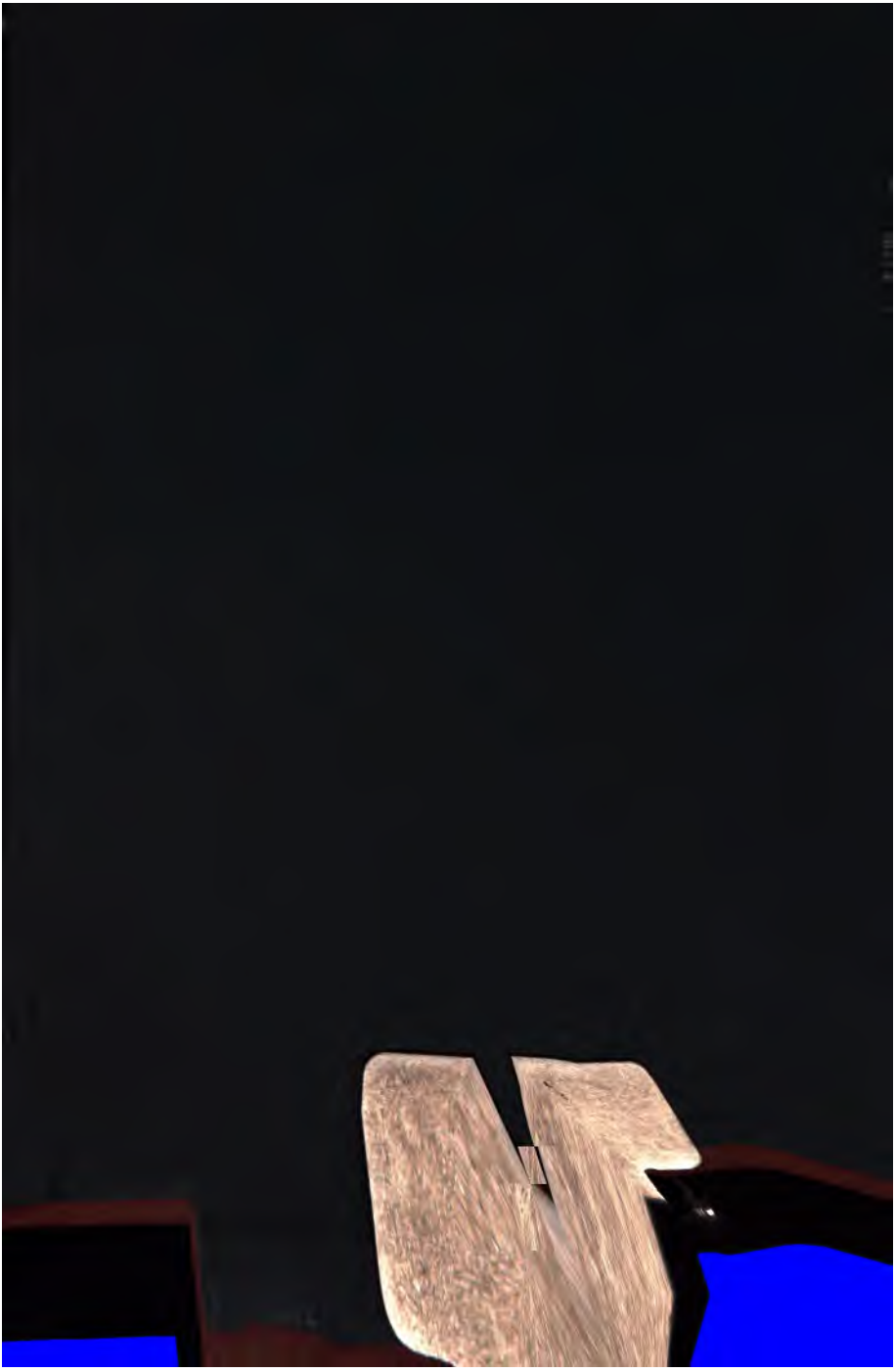
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